

**Black animation: From *The Proud Family*
revival to *My Dad the Bounty Hunter***

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Introduction

This 90-page e-book consists of ten chapters. It brings together my reviews of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), *Craig of the Creek*, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* ([here](#) and [here](#)), *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*, *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire*, and *Supa Team 4*, along with [concluding remarks](#). These chapters were posted on my personal WordPress blog on [December 8, 2022](#); [December 12, 2022](#); [February 2023](#); [March 29, 2023](#); [March 31, 2023](#); [April 2023](#); [August 8, 2023](#); [August 23, 2023](#); [September 2023](#).

These articles were published either on *Pop Culture Maniacs* or *The Geekiary*. I did some spell-check and other revisions to ensure this text made sense, and to correct any errors that I made in the original text, which comes to over 26,000 words! Otherwise, the text is almost the same. Happy Reading!

- Burkely

Chapter One: "The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder": A Revival Which Lives Up to the Original



The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder tells the story of Penny Proud, a 14-year-old Black girl who navigates the 2020s with her ambitious mom, overprotective dad, loving grandmother, troublesome siblings, and loyal school friends.

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder is a coming-of-age comedy series and animated sitcom by Bruce W. Smith and Ralph Farquhar which began airing on February 23 of this year. It is a revival of *The Proud Family*, an all-ages animated series that aired on the Disney Channel from 2001 to 2005, and marked the first original animated series on the Disney Channel. As a warning, this recommendation discusses spoilers for the first four episodes of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*.



Oscar dressed up as Prince and Trudy in a flashback in episode 2

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder centers on Penny Proud (Kyla Pratt), a 14-year-old teenage girl who lives in the town of Smithville with her mom Trudy (Paula Jai Parker), dad Oscar (Tommy Davidson), paternal grandmother Sugar Mama (Jo Marie Payton), her pet dog Puff (audio effects provided by Carlos Alazraqui), and her two younger siblings BeBe (Aiden Dodson) and CeCe (Bresha Webb).

The show also features Penny's enthusiastic but selfish and untrustworthy best friend, Dijonay Jones (Karen Malina White), who likes to gossip. Her antics have often gotten Penny in trouble. Both hang out with Zoey Howzer (Soleil Moon Frye), a smart but timid, shy, and kind White girl, and an Afro-Latine girl, LaCienega Boulevardez (Alisa Reyes) who is beautiful, popular, and an excellent student. Although she is good friends with Dijonay, she is the frenemy of Penny. LaCienega convinces her parents, Felix (Carlos Mencia) and Sunset (Maria Canals-Barrera) that she is a sweet and upstanding girl when she is actually snobbish, arrogant, and selfish.

Other supporting characters include Oscar's older brother Bobby Proud (Cedric the Entertainer), an extremely wealthy Black businessman named Wizard Kelly (Aries Spears), Felix's father Papi (Alvaro Gutierrez) who Suga Mama has a crush on, the doctor for the Proud

family named Dr. Payne (Kevin Michael Richardson), and the 9-year-old neighbor of the Proud family, Peabo (Cree Summer). There's also the flamboyant gender non-conforming friend of Penny named Michael Collins (EJ Johnson) and former bullies Nubia, Olei, and Gina, who are named the Gross Sisters (voiced by Raquel Lee) who become interested in hip hop, start a rap group, and perform.

New characters in this revival series include Penny's boyfriend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Brown (Asante Blackk), and the Leibowitz-Jenkins family. The latter is headed by Randall (Billy Porter) and Barry (Zachary Quinto). They have two children, a 14-year-old adopted girl named Maya Leibowitz-Jenkins (voiced by Keke Palmer) and her twin brother, Francis "KG" Leibowitz-Jenkins ("A Boogie" Dubose), who is adjusting to life in Smithville.

Apart from the new characters, there is one departure: Sticky Webb. Voiced by Orlando Brown in the original series, he only appears in the first episode when he moved to Japan where his father is getting a new job. Although some fans may have been disappointed in the fact that *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* destroys the dynamic between Dijonay and Sticky, as she continually had a crush on him, it allows for the new characters, Kareem, Randall, Barry, Maya, and KG to become more integrated into the story. In fact, KG becomes a rebound of sorts for Dijonay, who treats him like she treated Sticky.

The opening song of the series is very similar to the original, except this theme song is sung by Joyce Wrice rather than Solange Knowles and Destiny's Child in *The Proud Family*. This has, understandably, irked some fans, but has also, sadly, led the creators of this series [to receive death threats](#), serving yet another example of people taking things too far. While the new song is not my favorite opening, for an animated series it is catchy and hearkens back to the original.

Compared to the original series, the animation is smoother and cleaner, the characters are more expressive, and the episodes are longer. While episodes in *The Proud Family* were 20-22 minutes long, in this series, they range from 27 to 30 minutes. This is in part because the series is airing exclusively on Disney+ and doesn't need to accommodate commercials.

Even so, this revival series has some of the same dynamics as the original. Oscar is what makes the series an animated sitcom. Often disciplined by his mother, Suga Mama, his head is shown flying into outer space, thrown into the air comedically, while acting immature, childish,

and even hyperactive. Through it all, he is still a well-meaning father to Penny, running a business that creates revolting snacks but somehow manages to stay in business despite it all.

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder features some of the same themes as the original. Wizard Kelly is still a business mogul who runs for mayor, Bobby is still his ebullient self, even tricking out Trudy's pet ambulance, and Trudy tells Oscar to pull his weight.

On the other hand, Oscar is afraid to see Penny grow up and tries to hold her back, but later listens and realizes that he should give her some independence. Even so, he happens to embarrass her when he tries to recruit Kareem for his basketball team to get back at Wizard Kelly. He can be sweet and helpful at other times, telling Penny about Prince and showing her how to play a vinyl disk. In another episode, he is shown as being a gullible fool as he buys a toxic waste dump as the future home of his Snackland amusement park, something which his family ridicules him for, leaving him to sink into the toxic sludge.

In a hint at the fact that the series is a revival, Penny and her friends magically become teenagers overnight. Additionally, scenes from the original series are used when characters have flashbacks to past events, an ingenious way to tie the two series together.



In this series, Penny stays righteous and thinks that everyone is her friend, but admits that Maya is right when she calls her "superficial." Both later become better friends by the show's fourth episode. Unfortunately, it appears that this series is either disregarding or putting aside the

wild adventure-comedy film, *The Proud Family Movie*, with a plot that seems like an episode of *Kim Possible* or even *Totally Spies!* which capped the original run of *The Proud Family*, as Penny is 16 years old in the series.

In what I expect will be a 10 or 12 episode order, this revival series has a chance to buck what [can be described](#) as colorist themes in the original series. [Some argued](#) that Dijonay's character in that series indicated that even when animated, the "dark skin girl is designated as the ghetto one" while others went as far as to call for the cancellation of the revival series for promoting racist and colorist caricatures of Black women who have darker skin, [mainly citing](#) Dijonay as the biggest exemplar of this issue. This revival series seems to hint that this will be countered. Already, Dijonay's yellow hair was revealed as a wig, and Maya, who has skin as dark as Dijonay, is a strong, passionate girl who stands up for causes. Even so, the blue-black-skinned Gross Sisters are still shown as "ashy" and have a lot of attitude.

There are other hints that this revival series will be different. Farquhar [has stated](#) that the show will portray more than a singular "view of Blackness or a Black family" while Smith said it is blazing a path in animation, with elements of the Western, sci-fi, and horror genres. I am somewhat confident that this series will address this more and in a positive way, in a break from the past, even if those on online forums for Black women, like Lipstick Alley, are more skeptical of the series. In that way, the series can more of a "portal for viewers to get an idea of what the world is like or what the world thinks of them," as one critic of the original series [wrote in 2018](#).

Latine characters have a key role in this show, similar to other Disney series like [Kim Possible](#), [The Owl House](#), and the original series. LaCienega is [part of an Afro-Latine family](#), which is still rare in television series, animated and not. Even so, there is the continuing joke that Suga Mama doesn't understand what Papi is saying as he is speaking Spanish. Hopefully, in future episodes, she learns Spanish, and this tired joke is not used anymore, so they can have a more genuine relationship.

Similar to how the original series focused on issues such as bullying, cheerleading, self-worth, and friendship, this series has episodes about the inhumanity of zoos, complete with a panda bear named Shuggie (voiced by CeeLo Green) who declares he is a "player" who doesn't want to be saved, the insidious nature of social media influencers who have the ability to "cancel" people, playing basketball, standing up for what you believe in, and remaining true to yourself.

The episode about influencers is altogether different than the cringe-worthy commentary on so-called "cancel culture," really "consequence culture" [in an episode](#) of the should-be-forgotten series, *The Freak Brothers*. The series instead shows Penny denouncing influencers like Makeup Boy (voiced by Bretman Rock) as posers and those who follow them as "sad."

Her rise to power somewhat echoes the episode in the original series, "A Star Is Scorned," where she becomes a star and isolates her friends for fame, believing it is all about her. In the episode in this series, she becomes an influencer, receiving endorsements and popularity. In the process, she "cancels" Makeup Boy after he disses her, and she realizes she can make people buy stuff they can't afford, while people are afraid of getting cancelled by her.

Penny even ends up cancelling [LaCienega](#), shocking her, is able to get rid of everyone in the school, and send away Suga Mama to boot camp. She is later brought down thanks to Maya who hatches a plan which exposes her after Oscar got money from Wizard Kelly, with her friends turning on her, as she loses followers and her influence almost in the blink of an eye.

As she walks away from school in shame, Makeup Boy, whose real name is Sebastian Boyle, is later grateful to her as he was seduced by power and influence. The lesson at the end seems to be that your family is more important than your friends and will stand by you, as her mom and grandmother forgive Penny after she apologizes. It was somewhat strange to me that Penny's friends threw her away like a used dishrag and never apologized to her for making her like a pariah.



Barry, Randall, and Michael, the three LGBTQ characters who have appeared in the series so far

There is one major change from the original series in *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*: the casual queerness. Not only is Michael now openly gender-conforming and gay, but KG and Maya have two gay dads, Randall and Barry. It's even possible there could be an enemies-to-lovers situation between Penny and Maya, and hopefully, there are "different portrayals of Blackness" and a depiction of the "vast spectrum of Blackness" while the show further explores sexuality and gender with the addition of new character, as [Nic of Autostraddle pointed out](#).

The most recent episode, "Father Figures" focuses on this more than any episode that has aired so far. Maya and KG are teased by those at school after Dijonay tweets that Maya and KG have two dads, and there is an undercurrent of homophobia in the school. Penny rallies to their defense, attempting to joke about broken families, offending Maya, and leading KG to criticize them for making a joke about something that they know nothing about.

Penny later faces homophobia from her dad, who can't explain why she can't hang out around Maya and KG, later claiming he is trying to "protect" her, like all the other dads in the neighborhood. despite Trudy, Puff, and Suga Mama strongly disagreeing with him. This comes to a head when he goes to a bank to get a loan and Randall, one of Maya's dads, is a bank manager at Wizard Kelly Bank, and puts the loan away after Oscar reacts with shock to see Randall and Barry kissing.

Luckily, Penny breaks through this homophobia by standing up to the Gross Sisters, defending Maya, giving a rambling speech. In the end, they all meet at the Leibowitz-Jenkins house, with Oscar apologizing to Randall for being homophobic and getting the loan after all. Everyone seems to come to their unintentional housewarming party, dancing to the disco music, and Oscar is overcome with emotion, beginning to see more of the world through Penny's eyes.

My guess is that there will be more LGBTQ characters in the future, possibly even some among the show's main cast. After all, the series will feature, in future episodes, guest stars like Lizzo, Jaden Smith (as college Myron), Lena Waithe (as college Maya), Al Roker, Lamorne Morris, Brenda Song (as Vanessa Vue), according to the [official Disney+ Twitter account](#). Waithe was previously in a relationship with Alana Mayo, an executive producer [of *gen:LOCK*](#). Other queer guest stars include Lil Nas X and Jane Lynch according [to *Out* magazine](#).

Further LGBTQ characters have been hinted at by Farquhar who stated that a lot changed since the original show, saying that this revival series will [take on more topical issues](#) rather than having LGBTQ characters referred to in "coded language." He also confirmed that Michael was gay in the original series but that they had to be underhanded in the way this is talked about. Smith [added](#) that the show has more than "just one gay person... representing the entire LGBTQ+ spectrum."

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder has the promise of breaking down barriers through its inclusion of multicultural characters and families, especially those which are part of the LGBTQ, Latine, and Black communities. I fully believe it will address racial issues and other topics, like the original series. No matter [how many episodes](#) are remaining until its first season comes to an end, the series will undoubtedly have plotlines that focus on the pull between family togetherness and family conflict, protesting, rumors, popularity, dating, and jealousy.

It is likely there will be episodes on gender equality, women's rights, medicine, vaccines, and animal exploitation, like in the original series. At the same time, it is not known whether

there will be a focus on veterinary services, pet care, file sharing, music downloading, homelessness, Black history, Black wealth, or show business, all of which were covered in the original series as well.

Those working on *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* are a talented group of people. Latoya Raveneau, who directed a few episodes, was the showrunner of the animated short series *Rise Up, Sing Out*, and a storyboarder for *Final Space*. Tara N. Whitaker, who directed one episode, previously was a prop designer for series such as *Kid Cosmic*, *Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure*, *The Owl House*, and *Wonder Over Yonder*, and character designer for *Middle School Moguls*. The series art director, Eastwood Wong, had worked on animated series like *Carmen Sandiego*, *Star vs. the Forces of Evil*, and *Steven Universe*.

Other staff members are new to the animation industry, like show writers Wolf-Rudiger Bloss, Ashley Soto Paniagua, Leo J. Lawrence, and KyLee Evans. Lawrence and Evans previously worked on live-action series before this one, while Paniagua had written for *Vida* and *Fast & Furious Spy Racers*. Some worked on the original series, like writer Doreen Spicer, and co-executive producer, Calvin Brown Jr. Breana Williams, the production coordinator, previously worked on *Mira: Royal Detective* and is currently working on an indie animated series [LimeLight](#) as a [storyboard revisionist](#). There are various other talented storyboarders and other employees working on the show as well.

Although there are talented individuals working on the show, it remains to be seen how much Disney can further social equality. The studio's linked with a lot of prejudice in the past and many productions [continue to draw "criticism"](#) regarding diversity, both onscreen and behind the scenes. After all, Disney CEO Bob Chapek put out a weak statement before the passage of "Don't Say Gay" bill in Florida [which bans](#) the teaching of LGBTQ topics, says schools should not encourage sexual orientation or gender identity to be discussed, and allows parents to sue schools for having such discussions. Chapek [later scrambled to act like he cared](#), after the law had already passed through both houses of the Florida legislature and the Florida governor, who has been a big proponent of the bill, falsely claimed it wouldn't harm LGBTQ people.

Putting aside the problematic nature of Disney for a second, and focusing on the show, I can say with full confidence that I recommend *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*. Although I wasn't completely clicking or vibing with the show at first, by the fourth episode it has really pulled me in.

The series is currently streaming on Disney+. Episode 5 will debut on the Wednesday of this week, March 16, 2022.

And while you are at it, you can get [*The Proud Family Movie*](#) from your local library, buy a DVD of the original series and film on Amazon or elsewhere, or simply stream both offerings on the Disney+ streaming service.

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Chapter 2: Glitz, Diversity, and Representation in "The Proud Family" Revival



Screenshot: *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*

On February 23, 2022, *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* premiered on Disney+. This series tells the story of 14-year-old Penny Proud and her family as they navigate their lives in the California town of Smithville, from the schoolyard to the home.

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder is a coming-of-age animated comedy and sitcom by two Black men, Bruce W. Smith and Ralph Farquhar. It is a reboot of the acclaimed two-season animated series, *The Proud Family*, which aired on the Disney Channel from 2001 to 2005. Smith is also known as a director of films such as *Bébé's Kids* and *Hair Love*, and co-creator of *Da Boom Crew*.

This post discusses some spoilers for *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*. This post mentions sensitive topics such as sexism, bullying, and abusive families.

The first season of this all-ages animated series began with a bang. The first four episodes focused on the inhumanity of zoos, [power](#) of social media influencers, basketball, remaining true to who you are, standing up for your values, and homophobia, as I pointed out [in my series recommendation](#) on March 13.

The other six episodes in season one continue to focus on pertinent themes. This includes amusement parks, ride-sharing apps, college life, homelessness, crowdfunding, Latine culture, genealogy, and reality shows.

The animation remains smooth and defined throughout all 10 episodes of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*. This is accompanied by spoken Spanish with subtitles. That's an improvement from the original, which had no subtitles for Spanish speakers, and storylines which pull you in. The same can be said for the show's pop music, with tunes which showcase the character's talents.

The voice actors shine through in all the episodes, as do the recurring or guest stars. This includes people such as [Brenda Song](#), who voices reporter Vanessa Vue, Logan Browning, Bresha Webb, Lena Waithe, Jaden Smith, and Tiffany Haddish.

Social commentary

In keeping with the original series, *The Proud Family*, this series continues to engage in social commentary on various issues. This includes worker/animal exploitation by Penny's father, Oscar (voiced by Tommy Davidson). He has a monkey named Mr. Chimps who works for his business, Proud Snacks, which makes disgusting snacks but happens to stay in business.

In the show's sixth episode, Penny and her friends begin a ride-sharing business named Get-In, where people can work for a small amount of pay. All of Penny's (voiced by Kyla Pratt) friends, apart from Zoey (voiced by Soleil Moon Frye), abandon her in this endeavor. She became successful after gaining popularity on social media for the app. But this doesn't last. Thanks to Oscar, her business crashes and burns, as Mr. Chimps is driving a taxi without a license.

In a later episode, Penny, tired of her parents, summons Al Roker (voiced by himself). He transports her to an alternative episode where she is in college for a week, saying that if she stays after that period, it is permanent.

While there, she becomes enthralled in the party scene, drives recklessly, and falls behind in her classes. As a result, her friends leave, with Maya (voiced by Keke Palmer) calling it a "glorified plantation". In the process, she becomes indebted to Roker, telling her that she needs to pay tuition, go to class, and pay her food tab.



A grown-up Penny hugs her father, Oscar

The episode shines a light on precarity of college students exploited through student debt and their financial situations. To pay off her debt, she must sell junk and be in class or she will be there for eternity. There is also a scene where she sells schoolbooks back to the college library. She receives \$3.50 for them, even though she spent over \$1,000 for the books.

In other episodes of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, homelessness is highlighted as an issue. In the show's eighth episode, Penny and her friends work together to help a strict substitute teacher, Ms. Hill (voiced by Tiffany Haddish). The school fired her after people learned that she was living in the school since she had nowhere else to live.

Although Ms. Hill causes consternation in Penny's home, insulting her family members and forcing them to take Black history classes, Penny becomes her biggest advocate. In a school assembly, she tells students that teachers should get paid a living wage. She also asks people to contribute to a fund allowing Ms. Hill to find a decent place to live.

Due to the students' perception of Ms. Hill, they bristle at the idea that that give money to her. Thanks to Zoey's dance going viral, they can raise enough money. In the end, Ms. Hill goes off with Penny's uncle, Bobby, and both are romantically engaged.

Family strains and the importance of family

Like Disney series such as [*Kim Possible*](#), [*Phineas & Ferb*](#), [*The Ghost and Molly McGee*](#), and [*Milo Murphy's Law*](#), there is a focus on the value of family. This follows Disney's family-friendly brand.

In *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, this is not without strain. Penny often clashes with her father, Oscar, who interrupts her date with her boyfriend, Kareem, and puts parental blocks on her laptop. However, she gets around this, in one episode, by using a burner phone.

Time and time again, Penny realizes the importance of being grown and bonds with Oscar. In one episode, she apologizes to Oscar. She says that she thought that being alone was going to be easy but isn't ready for it. He reassures her that she has time to figure it out and that before she is on her own, her family has got her back.

Throughout the first season, Oscar and Penny have important bonding moments. This offsets any negative characteristics [*which could be seen*](#) as reinforcing stereotypes.

At times, Oscar seems like he is being sexist and stuck in the old ways, like when he declares that "cooking is a woman's job". However, Penny also believes that cooking is her mom's job.

Oscar is as much of a loving father as Homer is in *The Simpsons* or Anne Boonchuy's father in *Amphibia*. He cares about Penny, although he isn't always the best at showing it.

The family's dynamics are colored by continued tensions between Oscar and his wife, Trudy (voiced by Paula Jai Parker), as she often belittles him for his inane antics. At other times, they come together and enjoy each other's company.

Oscar's beliefs are not unique, in this regard. Bobby (voiced by Cedric the Entertainer) is also shown to be somewhat sexist. In one episode, he acts like he is going to help Zoey with her dancing and instead he makes her do all sorts of housework. On the one hand, he does help her by having her listen to funky music and gives her certain dance moves, allowing her to dance on stage. On the other, how he acts toward Zoey says something about his character and his treatment of women.

Suga Mama Proud (voiced by Jo Marie Payton), Penny's hip wrestling grandmother, has a continued presence in the Proud household. Even though she has her own place to live, she often hangs out in the Proud house. She is the mother of Oscar and Bobby, and has an ongoing courtship with Papi Boulevardez, a grandfather of their Latine neighbors.

Throughout the series, consistent with the original series, she often ribs on her son, Oscar. She tends to like her other son, Bobby, who often talks about things like 1970s funk bands, better than Oscar, to his great annoyance.

Diversity and Latine culture

In [my original recommendation](#) of this series, one of the show's creators, Ralph Farquhar, argued that *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* will portray more than a singular "view of Blackness or a Black family". This is also true when it comes to Latine culture. The show prominently features LaCienega Boulevardez (voiced by Alisa Reyes), her parents Sunset (voiced by Maria Canals-Barrera) and Felix (voiced by Carlos Mencia), and others in her family.

LaCienega is the Latine frenemy of Penny, with both often disliking one another, but [still have respect](#) for one another. Although LaCienega's exact ethnicity is not yet known, the series deserves praise for focusing and featuring Afro-Latine characters. This is strongest in the ninth episode of the series.

In that episode, LaCienega, known as LaCi for short, prepares for her quinceañera, a celebration of her 15th birthday, marking the celebration from girlhood to adulthood. She is terrified by her cousin, LaBrea Avandúñez (voiced by Princess Nokia) attending, along with her aunt, Melrose (voiced Eva Longoria), who has a habit of putting people down, including her own daughter!

Sunset's jealousy of Melrose leads her to spend a huge sum on quinceañera, terrifying Felix. Not surprisingly, Oscar does not understand why so much money is being spent. LaCi ends up lashing out at her friends and LaBrea seems like the troublemaker behind it all.

The fancy outfits, photos together, and glitz fade into nothingness, due to a plan by LaBrea to "get rid" of LaCi, by tying her to a rocket, so she can live with Sunset. When confronted with LaCi hanging from a dangerous ride, not far from death or serious injury, she gives LaCi advice that saves her life. She then covers for LaBrea, instead of admitting that she is the cause of the situation.

On the surface it might appear that LaBrea is let off the hook for trying to "disappear" LaCi, and for the years of bullying her. It could even be argued that LaCi's gesture is unrealistic and problematic. However, there is another side to her actions.



Sunset, LaCi, LaBrea, and Melrose on stage at the end of the episode.

While it is not known whether LaCi fully forgives LaBrea, she comes out of her shell more. Both have a quinceañera together. Melrose apologizes to Sunset for being angry for all those years, saying that her divorce stressed her out. It is also revealed that LaBrea is plus-sized, a fact that her mom forced her to keep hidden. The episode ends with Felix worried about all the money they spent on it. Even so, he is glad if LaCi is happy, even though they spent her college fund on the party, and Sunset gives him a kiss.

In this way, the series shares similarities with *Elena of Avalor*, a series headlined by a Latine princess, Elena (voiced by Aimee Carrero). The latter series even has an episode where Elena's "good friend", Naomi Turner, has a quinceañera.

Hopefully these themes are expanded in the next season of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, with a continued focus on Latine and Black families. In any case, as [some have argued](#), having one show or movie about people of color doesn't mean "equal representation."

Family roots and genealogy

Genealogy was once a pursuit for well-off White people. This changed after the airing of Alex Haley's *Roots* in the 1970s, the beginning of Henry Louis Gates' *Finding Your Roots* in

2012, and the proliferation of various groups [focused on the subject](#). It has led to an [even greater focus](#) by the Black community than ever before.

The season one finale of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* reflects this focus. In the episode, Trudy finds out that her family, the Parkers, can trace their roots across the country, and to North Africa. She pays over \$1,000 dollars on a DNA testing website, reflecting the focus on DNA [by Black people](#), and discovers that Suga Mama has roots in Towne, Oklahoma.

Trudy convinces her family to travel to Oklahoma. Suga Mama comes along, but not willingly, tied to the roof of the car. Later, Trudy pressures her family members to attend the family reunion at the Towne family ranch. While there, they meet Suga Mama's family, whose birth name is revealed to be Charlette. The audience learns that her father told her to never come back and that she left for one major reason: to escape her toxic and sexist father, who hurt her psychologically and possibly physically.

Suga Mama is given new backstory. The audience also learns that Suga Mama's dad declared that no girls were allowed in the rodeo, even though she could easily participate. It further shows him demanding that she cook him dinner and forcing her brother to participate in her place. As the episode ends, it appears that Suga Mama and her dog, Puff (visual effects by Carlos Alazraqui) depart the ranch, leaving behind the rest of the Proud family.

[One reviewer](#) for *Loud and Clear Reviews* described the episode as a "total blast" to review and watch. They noted that it introduces "cool new characters," expands Suga Mama as a character, and centers on the conflict between Suga Mama and her father. The episode is significant since it takes the characters outside of Smithville, a town in California where most of the show takes place. It remains to be seen how future episodes will continue the story from the season one finale.

This focus on family history is not unique to this series. *Amphibia*, *Carmen Sandiego*, *Mira Royal Detective*, *Infinity Train*, *Futurama*, and *Steven Universe* have storylines focusing on family roots, connections, or history.

LGBTQ representation

As I [wrote in February](#), *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* has the "promise of breaking down barriers through its inclusion of multicultural characters and families, especially those which are part of the LGBTQ, Latine, and Black communities." There are established

LGBTQ supporting characters. This includes Barry and Randall Leibowitz-Jenkins (voiced by Zachary Quinto and Billy Porter), an interracial gay couple who lives in Smithville, fathers of Maya and Francis "KG" (voiced by Artist "A Boogie" Dubose). Even more prominent is Michael Collins (voiced by EJ Johnson), a gay and gender-nonconforming friend of Penny.

Michael is into dance, clothing, and his hair looks like pastel paint strokes. It gives him a certain style unique from his look in the original series. He even dances, in one episode in front of stage with ribbon wand. This is like the one that Mega Pearl, i.e. Royal Pearl or Rose Pearl as some fans called her, used in *Steven Universe Future* or Maron Kusakabe in [Phantom Thief Jeanne](#).

There are additional LGBTQ guest stars. This includes Lizzo, who [sees herself](#) as part of the LGBTQ community. She has a starring role in the show's fifth episode, telling a crowd that people need to love themselves. Princess Nokia, also known as Destiny Nicole Frasier, voiced LaBrea. She is bisexual, gender non-conforming, of Puerto Rican descent, and [speaks about self-love](#).



Maya meets LaBrea and happily shakes her hand, while LaCi looks on, annoyed.

It is not known if any of the main cast have storylines which explore any possible LGBTQ identities. But Maya hinted at the possibility in one episode, describing LaBrea as beautiful, even though she hadn't met her before.

Even though LaBrea is likely a one-time guest star, Maya's comment might hint at a possible romantic or sexual attraction. After all, Maya's voice actress [said in 2017](#) that a person's sexuality can be fluid. She also rejected putting herself in a box and confining herself to one identity, saying that people change and grow over time.

Other guest stars showcase *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*'s diverse stories. Jeremy O' Harris, who voiced a college-age Michael, is Black and gay, while Lena Waithe, who voiced a college-age Maya, is a Black lesbian.

Other pertinent themes

The series often focuses on the dangers of bad business practices, with Oscar often as a foil. He runs an unsafe amusement park, Snackland, which even resulted in a terrible accident. Although the news coverage is negative, people flock to Snackland even though they know they will get hurt and it is dangerous. This contrasts with the time when Penny was a temporarily successful businessperson. There's also multimillionaire Wizard Kelly (voiced by Aires Spears) making his money as a professional basketball player.

One episode even provides a commentary-of-sorts on reality shows. The audience learns that Oscar once pitched the reality show, Crab Barrel, about Proud Snacks. Thanks to his weird snacks, his presentation goes horribly wrong, leading them to deny him funding. As a result, he calls the show a scam and won't believe in it. In the episode, the other competitor is taken out of the running and judges are won over. They begrudgingly fund Penny's ride-sharing app "by default."

Unlike the original series, science and technology have a big showing. KG is the techy of the series, akin to Wade in *Kim Possible*, Darryl in *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, or Player in *Carmen Sandiego*. KG makes the ride-sharing app for Penny. In another episode, he tracks Penny's phone after she loses it. He also tries to save LaCi by using his drone.

It is [still in contention](#) how much the show bucks the colorism in the original series. Dijonay and the Gross Sisters, described by some as colorist stereotypes, are little changed in the reboot. Dijonay, who has a big family, is seen taking leftovers for her 10 brothers and sisters in

one episode. In another, she leaks photos of Ms. Hill, the homeless teacher. She is rewarded as part of a so-called "Snitches to Riches" program, wiping away her lunchroom debt. On a positive note, Pratt, who voices Penny, [has said](#) that she is attuned to the issue of colorism.

There have not been, and likely will not be, Asian stereotypes akin to those in the original series, like the Chang Triplets. Instead, Penny continues to [have a "gang](#) of girlfriends with a variety of looks and personalities". Those people would be her friends, rather than anyone she would be romantically involved with, since she has a boyfriend in this revival series.

Where the revival falls down

There are many aspects to praise about *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*. You could say that certain scenes, like Penny using a night crawler suit with different modes, like a stealth mode, hearken back to *Kim Possible*. You could point out that Penny's singing voice sounds like Candace's deep voice in *Phineas and Ferb* or highlight the talented guest stars.

However, the show's seventh episode showcases a missed opportunity. The show could have made the main characters college-age, working out problems at a local university, as they adapt to being adults in a coming-of-age story with the same tenor as in this series. The series could be even stronger. However, the creators, staff, or Disney could have scoffed at the idea, wanting to have the characters be the same age they were in the original show.

The series also raises the question: Are Penny's friends actually her friends? Time and time again, her friends abandon her. Are they her actual friends or they leeches? That is a matter of opinion. Sometimes they work together well, like when they sing on stage as a group LMPDZ (LaCi, Maya, Penny, Dijonay, and Zoey) in the show's fifth episode. At other times they don't try to stand by Penny, throwing her away like a used dishrag.

Some fans on Reddit, Twitter, and elsewhere, have asked why Penny is still friends with them. They have proposed that she should be a villain along with other ideas to make the series better, allowing her to be an [even stronger](#) feminist.



Despite the show's positives, it hasn't gotten its groove yet. At times, it appears to be too hip. It doesn't have the original's magnetism, with episodes focused on topics such as graffiti, Kwanzaa, spoken word poetry, karate, advertising, genetic experiments, Islam, wild animals, vacations, and elder abuse.

Unfortunately, this revival series negates 2005 film, *The Proud Family Movie*, as Penny is 14 years old, whereas in the film she has turned 16 years old and is exploring her life as a young adult. This series sadly implies that the whole wild film, which contains [a cool battle dance scene](#) and a *Totally Spies*-esque plot with human experimentation and cloning, is not canon.

Looking forward to Season 2

The season one finale ended on a cliffhanger. Since Season 2 [is currently](#) in production, the beginning of the season will continue the story from the finale. Most were excited about the news, but others said it would be the second part of season 1 and that they weren't fooling anyone. They asked when Disney would have "original animation" like *The Dragon Prince*, *Arcane*, or *Tales of Arcadia*. While the latter is a valid criticism, due to Disney's focus on reboots/revivals than other original content, it is not pertinent to discuss in length in this theme-centric post.

The second season of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* will need to answer many questions raised by the finale. The ranch where the Proud family is staying is a strange place, akin to Camp Wannawep in *Kim Possible*, a source of Ron Stoppable's trauma.

Penny encounters a huge man-fish and learns that Suga Mama's father has blocked cell service. Trudy may suffer consequences for dragging everyone to the ranch, resulting in fissures in the Proud family. Kareem, Penny's boyfriend, might even save them from the ranch. The whole finale gives off vibes which remind me of Jordan Peele's *Get Out*.

There is a possibility that Sticky (voiced by Orlando Brown) who left in the show's first episode, may [come back](#) in the future. My hope is that he does not return. If he became a major character again, it would up the character dynamics and cause a disruption. The new characters added in the revival are better than Sticky and build out the story more than he ever did.

The second season could also expand on Penny's possible vegetarianism. In the season one finale she mentioned that she wanted a veggie pizza, but her father rejected it. He declared it had to be a meat pizza and she did not object.

If the second season expands on Penny's comment, it should be a bigger part of the plot than Steven Universe's off-hand comment that he is vegetarian in an episode of *Steven Universe Future*. At the time, Steven's comment [led to division among the fanbase](#) on whether the fans should embrace it or denounce it. Penny is a woman with strong principles who could make the leap, but is the show's staff willing to make it canon?

Due to the [integral role of meat](#) in Black culture, the show staff may fear that changing Penny in this way would lead to anger and challenge the beloved status of the original series and this revival. Even the writers structure an episode on her vegetarianism like other episodes, it could lead to hostility from some Black people.

Furthermore, if Penny becomes a vegetarian in the show's second season, it could blow the doors wide open for such type of representation. Such a category includes few Black people other than M'Baku in *Black Panther*. And they are mostly supporting characters rather than protagonists.

Closing words

Hopefully, the series improves in the second season. Characters from other Disney series, like *The Owl House*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee* or *Amphibia*, could appear. *The Proud*

Family: Louder and Prouder does work to expand diverse animated stories of Black people, also showcased in the currently airing *Karma's World*, and older series such as *Static Shock*, *The Boondocks*, and *Afro Samurai*.

The success of this series will likely inform future projects by Farquhar and Smith. In December 2020, [both signed](#) a "wide-ranging, multiyear overall deal" to produce various series for Disney. It may do the same for Latoya Raveneau, a series director. She entered a deal [in April of this year](#) to "develop and produce animated projects" with Disney.

In the end, while I have my criticisms of the series, I look forward to seeing where it goes in the show's second season, and beyond. This series has the potential to run for three seasons and have an animated film, like the original series.

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder can be watched on Disney+, as can the original series, *The Proud Family*.

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Chapter 3: The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder Season 2 Review



The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder is a coming-of-age animated sitcom and adventure by Bruce W. Smith and Ralph Farquhar, two well-known producers. It is a revival and soft reboot of *The Proud Family*, a classic Disney series by Smith which aired in the early 2000s. This review will have spoilers.

This animated series centers on Penny Proud (voiced by Kyla Pratt), a 16-year-old Black girl in the town of Smithville. She attempts to navigate her home life, filled with the antics of her father, Oscar (voiced by Tommy Davidson), who owns a failing snack business, her mother, Trudy (voiced by Paula Jai Parker), a well-off veterinarian, her grandmother, Suga Mama (voiced by Jo Marie Payton), and her two siblings, Bebe and Cece. At high school, she has four friends-of-sorts: Michael Collins, Dijonay Jones, Zoey Howser, and LaCienega Boulevardez. They are voiced by EJ Johnson, Karen Malina White, Soleil Moon Frye, and Alisa Reyes respectfully. All the while, two new kids, Maya and KG, raised by two dads (Barry and Randall), try to adapt to their new life in Smithville.

The show's [first season](#) broke ground for featuring openly gay characters, [unlike in the original series](#), such as Michael, who is also gender non-conforming. His voice actor [even considered](#) gender transition. This character is joined by [an interracial couple](#): Barry and Randall

Leibowitz-Jenkins, who voiced by two gay actors (Zachary Quinto and Billy Porter). They are the adopted fathers of Maya and Francis "KG", voiced by Keke Palmer and "A Boogie" Dubose. Palmer previously [voiced Izzy Hawthorne in *Lightyear*](#), a lesbian character who has a wife named Alisha. She has also stated that she does not want her sexuality to be defined by labels and that people [should be fluid](#) when giving themselves labels.

The series has been swept in the culture wars, with claims it is promoting the "gay agenda" or is "anti-White". There are various White characters, including Zoey and Barry, and often promotes themes of racial togetherness, rather than division. Additionally, Michael is the only protagonist in the series who is part of the LGBTQ community. Barry, Randall, and Makeup Boy (voiced by Bretman Rock), with the latter beginning to date [Michael](#) later in the second season, are only recurring characters. In fact, Penny and Dijonay both have boyfriends, Darrius St. Vil (voiced by Chance the Rapper) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Brown (voiced by Asante Blackk), by the end of the season. Furthermore, Zoey is sweet on Myron (voiced by Marcus T. Paulk), and Maya romantically connects with one of the Chang Triplets, Billy.

Like the original *The Proud Family*, the series is [not neutral](#) when it comes [to politics](#). It often focuses [on racial injustice](#), whether [noting](#) past bans on interracial marriage, reparations, prejudice of Black people toward White people, anti-Black racism, sexism, or White skin privilege. This is interwoven with an emphasis on the importance of Black history, friendship, family, [Indigenous rights](#), harmonious neighbors, paying people fairly, respecting people for who they are, going beyond the color of their skin, and the folly of celebrity worship. Many books are name-dropped throughout the series, like *Africans and Native Americans*, as are the names of intellectuals such as Michelle Alexander, Robin DiAngelo, Elizabeth Acevedo, Leslie T. Chang, Saeed Jones, and Ta-Nehisi Coates. Many of these names are displayed during the English class taught by Kwame (voiced by Leslie Odom, Jr.).

Similar to season one, the second season of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* provides more background about the characters, whether about Suga Mama's short-lived romance with an indigenous cowboy named Quanah (voiced by Wes Studi), and how Barry and Randall met, or the history of the Soul Vibrations band composed of Oscar and his brothers, and [Giselle](#). As Penny says, in one episode, "you can't know yourself unless you know where you come from". This interconnected with the meaningful, and well-done, [episode](#) in which Bebe is

diagnosed [with autism](#), with the Proud family trying to figure out what to do with him, and coming to accept him, even if he requires more attention from them.

Other episodes focus on family conflict and fissures between friends, and neighbors, all of which are resolved before the end of each episode. This includes an episode when everyone is enamored with LaCienega's uncanny athletic ability (because of her big feet) and realize they have gone into a frenzy, another about Oscar, Felix, Puff, and Suga Mama fighting one another in an [absurd parody](#) of TV court shows, and one in which animals protest the awful Proud Snacks created by Oscar Proud. One of my favorite episodes in Season 2 [featured](#) a Princess Ball, with [references](#) to other Disney princesses: Penny dressed up as Princess Tiana, Dijonay as Cinderella, LaCienega as Princess Elena, Michael [as Pocahontas](#), Maya as Beyonce, and Zoey as Princess Merida.



There are many notable characters in *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* like the Principal Hightower (voiced by Patricia Belcher), who insults and demeans the students, reporter Vanessa Vue (voiced by Brenda Song) or incredibly wealthy Wizard Kelly (voiced by Aries Spears) who is shown as too tall to fit on the screen. However, in this season, Maya [comes into her own](#), especially in the season two finale. In the episode, the ghost of Emily (voiced by Storm Reid), a Black girl enslaved by the town's founder, Christian A. Smith, guides her, revealing her diary which proves that Smith is a slaveowner, contradicting the common town myth.

In an interesting depiction of wealth-as-power, Wizard Kelly orders the police, clad in riot gear, to stop Maya, and her friends, who are [protesting a ceremony](#) dedicating Smith, with chants and placards. As a result, all of them, and their parents, are thrown in the city jail, despite the efforts of Barry to protect his children. His detective badge shown to mean nothing, as the police, who are serving as Kelly's goons, step over it with their boots.

Although Maya is just as determined as Wednesday Addams, [in *Wednesday*](#), she does nothing equivalent to her. The latter, with the help of Thing, [lights the statue](#) of Joseph Crackstone, the Pilgrim founder of Jericho, on fire, causing it to melt. In fact, Kwame counsels his students to not pull down Smith's statue. This makes it ironic, then, that some reactionary media and personalities are all up-in-arms about the series, acting like it either "ruins" the original, or is "causing" division. Where were these people when *Wednesday* came out? They could have said some of the same things about that series, but they did not.

In many ways, the Season Two finale of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* sets the series apart from methods of police control over the citizenry depicted in *Velma* or the incompetent police force shown in *The Simpsons*. That is because this series emphasizes how some can control and distort history to their benefit, covering up what they don't want others to see. There is no acceptance of the town myth which Lisa Simpson [conceded to in *The Simpsons*](#). Instead, the town's name is changed to Emilyville, and a new statue is erected. In a possible indication of the long-standing nature of the existing economic system, Kelly becomes the mayor of the town, and faces no consequences for cracking down on Maya, her friends, family, or other town residents.

This series features many guest stars like Jane Lynch, Gabrielle Union, Al Roker, Ceelo Green, and Andre Jamal Kinney, along with other lesser-known ones like Forrest Goodluck, and sports stars Laurie Hernandez, Gabby Douglas, and Dominique Dawes. Of the guest characters, I liked [Dr. Lord](#) (voiced by Holly Robinson Peete) best as she gives Penny a chance to talk about her experiences as the oldest child in the family, in which she is given additional responsibilities.

[All the episodes](#) of the second season of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* all aired on February 1st, unlike the previous season, which aired over a two-month time period. There's [strong animation and backgrounds](#) which make the show [stand out](#), as does the voice acting and music selection, which fit with stories and characters. It is unfortunate this 10-episode season isn't spread out across two months, because it would be easier to watch the series and take in all

that happens. Even so, this season is much less glitzy [than season 1](#) and that is to the show's benefit.

Furthermore, I appreciate that the series did an episode based on the little-remembered, or regarded, but wild, *The Proud Family Movie*, which seemed like an episode [from *Milo Murphy's Law*](#), especially when they are fighting the Pistachions. In some ways, the episode reminded me of the annual *Treehouse of Horror* episodes [of *The Simpsons*](#).



It is hard to know where *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* goes from here. If it follows the recent pattern of Disney series, such as [Amphibia](#) and [The Owl House](#), it will have at least one more season. If that was the case, it would have one more season than the original series. However, it would need another 32 episodes to match the original, which aired from 2001 to 2005. [This revival](#) is different because the episodes range from 27 to 30 minutes, like the first season.

This series comes at the time that Disney is producing and airing series with diverse casts, like [The Ghost and Molly McGee](#). In fact, this year, *Iwájú*, *Kiff*, Marvel's [Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur](#), *Primos*, and *Hailey's On It!* are set to air. Disney has also contracted to produce series such as *Cookies & Milk*, *Moana*, and *Tiana*. On the other hand, Disney series with similar casts such as *Mira*, *Royal Detective* and *Amphibia* ended last year, while *The Owl House* is set to end this spring.

The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder is more unique, incorporating perspectives of Black creators, unlike [Hamster & Gretel](#), [Phineas and Ferb](#), [Kim Possible](#), and [Star Wars: The Bad Batch](#), which likely have mostly White writers rooms and have casts largely composed of White characters. As production coordinator, Breana Navickas, recently [wrote](#), the show's writer's room is Black, and [much](#) of the staff is Black and "a mix of asian folks, latine folks, white folks". This shows in this season even more strongly than in the first season, with the series establishing itself more, and putting the original into the dustbin.

This series is not alone. [Craig of the Creek](#), [Victor and Valentino](#), [Carmen Sandiego](#), [Arcane](#), and [Glitch Techs](#) are all [recent series](#) with diverse stories and characters. As such, *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, comes at an opportune time, when some executives are cutting back resources dedicated toward animated series, or squeezing workers in tough working conditions.

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed the second season even more than the first, and hope that Disney orders another season sometime this year, considering the [amount of people watching it](#). There are so many more stories to tell with these characters. This could include Penny getting new, and non-toxic friends. Even so, I doubt this will happen because the plot of the series depends too much on their existence to bring in new friends, just as *Futurama* would fall apart without the antics of the Planet Express crew keeping its current members. In addition, considering the issues [with colorism](#) in the original *The Proud Family*, and somewhat replicated in the first season, it was good to see that the Gross Sisters (Nubia, Olei, and Gina), all by Raquel Lee, only had a small part in this season. The fact that Maya had a bigger part in the season, instead of the Gross Sisters, is a welcome development.

One of the series' downfalls is repeating elements of narrative set-up in the original series. Although I still believe the series could be stronger if it focused on older versions of [the cast](#), the second season made the characters, at their current age, workable. It didn't fall into simple tropes used in *Kim Possible* and *Totally Spies!* Both animated series are centered in school environments.

Seasons 1 and 2 of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* are currently airing on Disney+. While you are at it, you can watch *The Proud Family* and *The Proud Family Movie* on Disney+ too!

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★☆
4.8 ★★★★★	

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Chapter 4: "Craig of the Creek": An Exciting Adventure for All Ages



Craig of the Creek follows Craig and his two friends, Kelsey and JP, who explore the creek near the fictional suburban town of Herkelton, Maryland. They face family conflict, snobs, witches, and other challenges along the way.

Craig of the Creek is an animated slice-of-life adventure-comedy series created by Matt Burnett and Ben Levin, who previously worked on *Steven Universe*. With the pilot debuting in December 2017, the series has run for four seasons and over 140 episodes. The season 4 finale aired on July 15, 2022. As a warning, this recommendation discusses some spoilers for the first four seasons of *Craig of the Creek*.



Kelsey (left), Craig (middle), and JP (right)

Craig of the Creek centers around the adventures of a 10-year-old Black kid named Craig Williams (Philip Solomon) and his two friends, Kelsey Pokoly (Noël Wells) and John Paul "J.P." Mercer (Michael Croner). All three are the show's protagonists. Kelsey's animal companion, Mortimor, also has an important role.

As the [opening theme](#) states, the series is focused on mysteries, danger, and friends who are "always by your side". The theme asks who will be around to not "let you down" when you go on a "wild ride". It claims that Craig, the eponymous protagonist, will "save the day".

Other characters are introduced as the series moves forward. This includes Craig's family, such as his father, Duane (Terry Crews), mother Nicole (Kimberly Hébert Gregory), his 16-year-old brother, Bernard (Phil LaMarr), and younger sister, Jessica (Lucia Cunningham). Also appearing is his grandfather Earl (Phil Morris) and his grandmother Jojo (Saundra McClain).

There are many more characters that Craig, Kelsey, JP, and Mortimor come across in their adventures through the Creek. Since the series is aimed at children and families, it, predictably, has affirming messages. The family-oriented Common Sense Media [described](#) the series as filled with "creativity, joy, adventure, individuality, and self-discovery".

Unsurprisingly, that focus has garnered *Craig of the Creek* various award nominations since its premiere in March 2018. This has included an Annie Award, two Daytime Emmy Awards, an NAACP Image Award, and a GLAAD Media Award. In 2018, the entire series won

the "Common Sense Seal, an award [given by Common Sense Media](#) for the "diversity of its characters and inclusion of minorities", meaning that the organization recommends the series for "children aged six and above."

This diversity is reinforced by the show's writing staff. In August 2021, Jeff Trammell, head writer for the series, [stated](#) that the series has a writing room full of people with "different backgrounds and different experiences". He said the room is open in such a way that "it never feels like you're the one representative", especially for people of color.

The series has garnered a broad fan base since its debut, with hundreds of thousands of people watching each episode. This is reflected in the 120 fan fiction works [on Archive of Our Own](#), 43 fan fiction offerings on [FanFiction.Net](#), and over 15,000 followers of the [crew's Twitter account](#).



Bernard and his girlfriend, Alexis

Although the series is for all ages, it also focuses on adult issues, like breakups and pressures on young adults. At the same time, there is a focus on safety, family clashes, and interracial relationships. This includes the romance between Bernard and his girlfriend, Alexis (Karen Fukuhara).

The untamed wilderness, i.e. "Creek", in this critically acclaimed series is a place where rules of the outside world don't apply and where children rule over all. However, there are some older kids. Three teenagers who play card games in a cave are known as the "Elders" (Mark,

Barry, and David). While the show's creators voice two of these characters, Zachary Steel voices David.

There are many subgroups in the Creek. This includes the Junior Forest Scouts, the Horse Girls, the 10 Speeds, the Tea Timers, the Witches of the Creek, the Ninja Kids, the Sewer Kids, and the Alliance of Science. There's also Cardboard City and the Creek's main market, the Trading Tree. Some kids don't easily fit into any of the aforementioned groups.

However, these groups are occasionally united together by Craig. He organized the Council of the Creek, based on what his grandmother Jojo does as a local politician. He, and his friends, meet at the Stump, which they have turned into a hideaway.

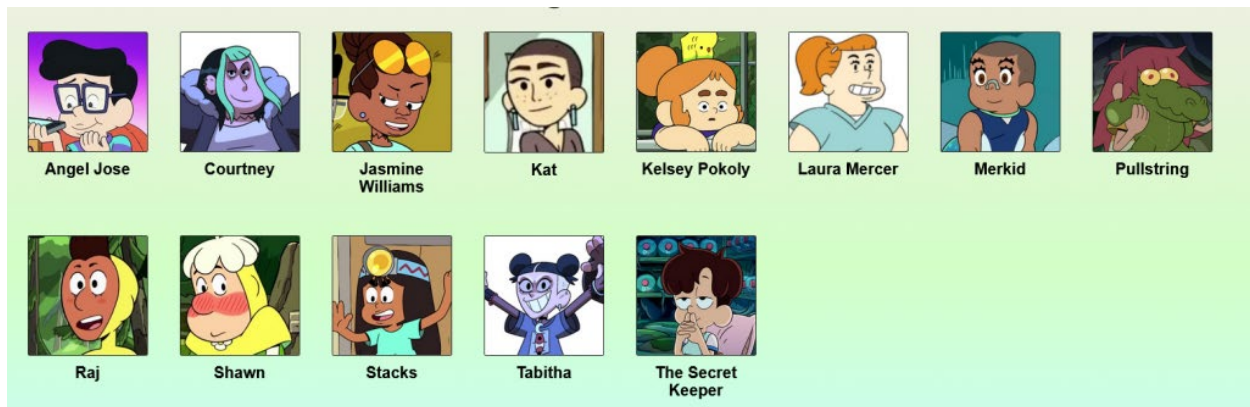
Unlike other series, the Creek kids are a diverse group. The series [has been praised](#) for "broadening the ethnic-racial representations in children's media" along with *Molly of Denali* on PBS, *Dora the Explorer* on Nickelodeon, and *Elena of Avalor* on Disney. The latter [ended](#) in August 2020 when Disney canned the series after three seasons.

[Diverse characters](#) in *Craig of the Creek* include Cannonball (Trammell), a member of the Ten Speeds, a group of kids who love riding mountain bikes. Then there's Carter Brown (Zeno Robinson), a kid obsessed with building cardboard contraptions. My favorites include Wren (Ashleigh Crystal Hairston), a nerdy girl who conducts wild experiments, and Kitherine "Kit" (Davis) who runs the Trading Tree.

This racial diversity is [no accident](#). Black storyboarders and writers make sure the show "strikes the right cords". Characters like Craig's father were composites of Trammell and Tiffany Ford's fathers. Lamar Abrams created Craig's grandmother.

Levin and Burnett said that they wanted to have a "positive impact" with a show that is fun for kids and reflects diversity from the actual world. They [argued](#) that the show combines the experiences of the show's crew.

The show taps into, as some critics [described it](#), the "adventurous side of Cartoon Network's viewers". Plots are a combination of the character's real-life experiences and their vivid imaginations.



13 characters in the series stated as LGBTQ in Insider's LGBTQ characters and cartoons database

LGBTQ+ representation [shines through](#) in *Craig of the Creek*. The *Insider* [database](#) of LGBTQ cartoon characters lists 13 characters for the series. Some of these characters only appear occasionally. Others are more prominent.

This representation is genuine. For instance, Angel José, a 10-year-old that runs the Creek Daycare, is non-binary, agender, and uses they/them pronouns. For much of the series, non-binary storyboarder and writer Angel Lorenzana [voices](#) them.

In the show's fourth season, Ben J. Pierce, a non-binary actor, voices Angel. Laura Mercer, the older sister of JP, is a lesbian and [in a relationship](#) with another girl, Kat. Fortune Feimster, a lesbian comedian, voices her.

There are other lesbian characters in the series. Tabitha and Courtney masquerade as "witches of the creek". In the episode "The Haunted Dollhouse" they kiss. In others, they hold hands or hang out together.

Craig of the Creek also has implied [queer characters](#). This includes Jasmine Williams (Tawny Newsome), daughter of Darnell and Kim, and Craig's cousin. In the episode "Cousin of the Creek", she [tells her cousin](#) that she is texting her girlfriend.

It is implied that Pullstring and Merkid are non-binary. Some reviewers [compared](#) the number of non-binary characters in the series to *Steven Universe*, where every Gem is non-binary.

In the episode "Silver Fist Returns", Ben (Cole Escola), the "Secret Kid", keeper of Creek kids' secrets, reveals [his crush on George](#) (M. Michael Croner), a member of the Tea Timers. George reciprocates Ben's romantic feelings. Ben is also gender non-conforming.

Kelsey is a queer series protagonist. In the episode "Fire and Ice", [she confesses](#) her love for Isabella "Stacks" Alvarado (Montse Hernandez), a Latine bibliophile who hangs out in the library. While it was implied that both had feelings before that episode, they [become a couple](#) in the episode after Stacks admits her feelings for Kelsey during a secret book club.

Kelsey seems to have a crush on Vanessa "Wilderness" (Izabella Alvarez), a girl who roams across the Creek on a huge Tibetan Mastiff named Cheesesticks. However, Vanessa does not have the same feelings toward Kelsey. Instead, she has a crush on Craig.

Queer show writers such as [Kate Leth](#) and voice actors like Stephanie Allynne (voiced Marie) buttress this representation. The Creek is a place you can be free to be yourself, as a recent Cartoon Network tweet [stated](#). Lorenzana's art accompanied the message.



Craig challenges King Xavier in the series Season 3 finale

Craig of the Creek goes further, with a clash between good and evil. King Xavier (Charles DeWayne) rules the other side of the Creek, known as Herkleston Mills, with an iron fist. He inherited the title from his older sister Cheyenne (Najja Porter). Previously, Kenneth (Lamar Abrams) ruled over Herkleston Mills as the first king, after a highway overpass divided the Creek.

Xavier's right-hand woman is Maya ([Sydney Mikayla](#)). She helps preserve Xavier's hierarchy. Others assist the King as well. This includes a fast-runner, Keun Sup /"The Blur"

([SungWon Cho](#)), Jackie / "The Arm" who is deaf and [uses ASL](#), and Aggie / "The Squashinator" (Zahra Fazal).

Some are disaffected by Xavier's rule. This includes Raj (Parvesh Cheena) and Shawn (Croner) who are the Honeysuckle Rangers. Both are from a nearby neighborhood and [have feelings](#) for each other. Cheena is also a gay actor.

Raj and Cheena become allies of Craig. The Green Poncho, otherwise known as Omar (Robinson), becomes Craig's ally. He tries to protect Craig's side of the Creek from Xavier, and his domination, by standing guard at the overpass.

This all changes after Xavier takes photographs of Craig's map. He plots to take over Craig's side of the Creek. The final five episodes of *Craig of the Creek*'s third season are a showdown between the King, his lackeys, and other Creek Kids.

At first, Xavier engineers a crisis to take control of Craig's side of the Creek. He takes over the Trading Tree, bans games, destroys skate ramps, and tempts kids to support him with candy.

It seems he has won, at first. He even screws with the magical girl-esque Sparkle Cadet (Kamali Minter). He even manipulates a situation that forces Craig to leave the Creek and return home. But this is short-lived.



A high-stakes winner-take-all game of Capture the Flag begins. At the last second, Craig is victorious. Xavier loses his power. Craig declares that the Creek belongs to everyone. He says there is no need for a King and states that there is a whole other side of the Creek to explore.

This clash reminds me of the final four episodes of *Steven Universe*, which concluded that series. Considering that *Steven Universe* writers created the series and easter eggs to that show are present throughout *Craig of the Creek*, this may not be a coincidence.

The show's fourth season picks up where the third season left off. Craig, and his friends deal with the aftermath of Xavier's defeat. It somewhat echoes *Steven Universe Future*, where Steven dealt with the consequences of his victory over the Diamond Authority.

Omar, formerly the Green Poncho, becomes one of the stump kids. Craig tries to find his place in the Creek. Those from the "other side" of the Creek have more opportunities available to them as they are not hemmed in by Xavier.

These changes accompany continued diverse stories and characters. This includes a focus on the Filipino family of Sewer Queen, Latine mythologies told by Stacks in the library or Raj's Indian family.

In one episode, a Black woman, Maya, reconnects with Craig. She gives him advice, telling him that he should be himself, and not agree with what anyone else believes. In another, Craig bonds again with Sparkle Cadet.



Craig and animesque magical girl, Sparkle Cadet, in episode "The Sparkle Solution"

Craig of the Creek continues to have institutional support from Cartoon Network executives. The series [has been renewed](#) for a fifth season and an original movie. In February 2021, *Jessica's Big World*, a [preschool spinoff series](#) for Cartoonito, began production. While it is not known when the spinoff will premiere, the fifth season of *Craig of the Creek* will begin in 2023.

This means that this show will continue. This is a positive. It will be a boon for [cultural diversity](#), LGBTQ+ representation, and inclusion in animation. It joins other series such as the *Proud Family* [revival series](#), *Amphibia*, and *The Owl House*, all with similar themes.

While the music of the series [is nice](#), as are rap beats by MC Deltron (Teren Delvon Jones). I stayed with the series thanks to its voice actors, animation, and story, more than anything else. The often fourth wall breaks also made the series enjoyable.

I recognized some of the voice actors from elsewhere. This includes Gunnar Sizemore, Kari Wahlgren, Michaela Dietz, and Deedee Magno.

However, the number of episodes (145) and seasons is a major stumbling block. It is a huge time commitment, which wears you down by the end, even if watched over a long period of time. It is not a series that is easy to binge over one weekend. So, prepare yourself.

The series felt strange to me because it mainly appeals to kids. From early in the series, I realized that I wasn't the intended audience. A series where the characters are young adults would be more my speed than this series.

Despite these criticisms, I would still recommend *Craig of the Creek* due to its characters, plotlines, and themes. After watching all the episodes, I came to realize why it is such a wonderful show. The fifth season will likely continue in the same manner. Xavier may make a reappearance in the upcoming season, although it remains unknown what role he will play.

For those interested, *Craig of the Creek* is currently airing on Cartoon Network and streaming on HBO Max. It is also available on Amazon Prime and other platforms.

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Chapter 5: My Dad the Bounty Hunter Season 1 Review



My Dad the Bounty Hunter is a coming-of-age animated sci-fi adventure series by Everett Downing Jr. and Patrick Harpin. Both have worked in the animation industry for many years, often as storyboards or writers. However, this is their first series they have created on their own. This review will have spoilers.

This animated series centers on the story of Terry (voiced by Laz Alonso), a Black father who has a secret job: he is a bounty hunter named Sabo Bok. One day, his children, annoyed by his constant disappearances, [stowaway](#) in his flying car, and find themselves in a spaceship. Terry is forced to care for his precocious daughter Lisa (voiced by Priah Ferguson), and his nerdy, but anxious, son Sean (voiced by Jacobi Swain). All the while he faces his former business partner, Gorlox (voiced by Rob Riggle), and the Conglomerate, represented by The Fixer (voiced by Jim Rash) who is a bit like Agent Smith in the Matrix franchise.

Personally, I was not planning on watching this series, and knew even less about it, as no one has even bothered to create a Wikipedia page for it! In an effort to watch more shows made

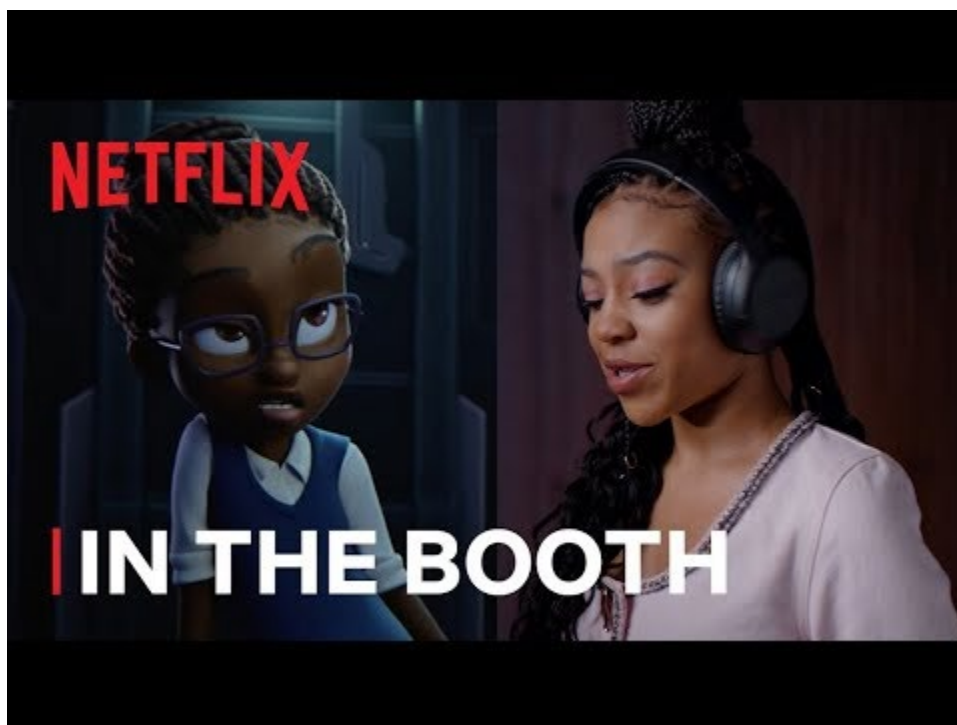
by Black creators, I decided to give this series a chance, and I was impressed by what I watched. The [voice actors](#) and animation [was top notch](#), as is the music selection.

In some ways, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* felt familiar. That's because voice actors like Yvette Nicole Brown, Kari Wahlgen, Yvonne Orji, [Christian Lanz](#), Keith Ferguson, Andrew Morgado, and SungWon Cho, who voice Krs, Lootbat, Tess and other assorted characters in this series, are all well-known voice actors. They are known for their roles in *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, *Velma*, *Fairfax*, *Elena of Avalor*, *Victor and Valentino*, *Craig of the Creek*, *High Guardian Spice*, *Gen:Lock*, and *The Cuphead Show*.

Furthermore, the plot line of this series reminded me, in more ways than one, of episodes of *Dogs in Space* and [Cleopatra in Space](#), which share some of the same voice actors. It even made me think of the first season of *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*, when Omega and the Bad Batch [are on the run](#) from various bounty hunters who want to kill or capture Omega.

Since the series is for all ages, there rarely blood spilled, just some laser battles, fights, and the like. Sure, no one is invincible, but also, no one gets seriously hurt, apart from Terry crash-landing on a planet and some scuffles. There aren't assassinations on the scale of the Immediate Murder Professionals [in Helluva Boss](#) or mass murder akin to the season one finale of *Invincible*.

All in all, I found *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* a fun watch. Even so, I would have preferred, just as I did with Season 2 of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, for 1-2 episodes to air every week, rather than all the episodes dropping [at once](#) on February 9th. That would allow for more time to take in what is happening in each episode. On the other hand, the series almost seemed to be designed for a binge, since a lot happens in a short period of time, assisted by music and fast pacing. The series was undoubtedly affected by the fact that, [reportedly](#), 99% of it was produced "at-home" because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



There was nothing to dislike when it comes to the [show's cast](#). This is even though this is Laz Alonso's first major voice role, while Jacobi Swain and [Priah Ferguson](#) are new to voice acting. They only voice characters in *Hamster & Gretel* and *Firebuds*. The same can be said for the more seasoned voice actors, including, apart from those I mentioned earlier, Jamie Chung (as Vax) and Maddie Taylor (as Torga). There are other new voice actors such as Leslie Uggams (as Grandma), [Everett Downing Jr.](#) (as Bogdog), and Devin Bright (as Player 2). This gives the series life and makes the characters much more relatable.

Just as *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* is likely to garner [a Black audience](#), the same is the case for *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*. It is [designed for families](#), especially, like [many](#) other all-ages series currently out there. In addition, characters like Lisa, who is sassy and intelligent, may become beloved. Some might even connect to the fact that [she organized](#) a gambling den at her local school and held high-stakes poker games. She is like Maya in *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*, in that she when she gets passionate and determined, no one can stop her. In fact, Lisa becomes skilled with a sword, and plays a vital role, especially when helping her dad out of [some tough situations](#), as does her brother Sean.

As I've said in other reviews, 3-D animation is not always my favorite. For instance, I think the *Tales of Arcadia* can be a bit hard to watch at times due to the animation style. However, the animation is [done very well](#) in this series. It is as strong as the flowing animation

[in D4DJ](#). Computer generated images can be good if they are animated with a distinct style, but traditional, 2-D animation is just as good. The series was supposed to be 2-D originally, but it cost less to do 3-D, as they didn't have to build sets, while flashback scenes were 2-D, which separated "the present from the past" as [Harpin noted](#).

Since *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is only 10 episodes, there isn't much time for lore, or even exploration of everyone's backstory. There's some backstory given for Terry, Tess (Terry's wife), and a bit for Lisa, but that's it. Even so, this doesn't take away from some of the messages in the series, emphasizing the importance of family, togetherness, and overcoming obstacles. This creates [a wholesome series](#) which sticks with you, episode-to-episode.

This fades away when the story centers on brutal exploitation of the Chillas by the Conglomerate. These creatures are imprisoned and forced to mine minerals for no pay (i.e., as slaves), with the materials only used to make the Conglomerate that much richer. Unlike Qui-Jon Jinn, who only freed Anakin from slavery on Tatooine, Lisa, with the help of Vax and her comrades, frees all of them. She ultimately [convinces](#) her dad, Terry, to side with her, once he realizes he is doing the wrong thing.

Watching *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* made me think of the exploitation of the worms in *Futurama*, especially exemplified by Slurms MacKenzie, who caused the caves to collapse, when he parties one last time. There are similarities to the Ewoks in *Return of the Jedi* in more ways than one, or rescue missions in *Star Wars Rebels* and *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*, which ends up freeing those imprisoned, often by the Galactic Empire, even if it puts their lives in jeopardy.



The season one finale of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* leaves the door [open](#) for more seasons. It remains to be seen if Netflix will go that route, or whether it will treat it like *City of Ghosts*, a curiosity which executives [deemed](#) as needing no continuation. I remain hopeful that despite all the shenanigans going on at Netflix right now, they will renew the series.

After all, since the series is [based on](#) the dynamics within the family of co-creator Everett Downing Jr., there is likely more to explore in that realm. There are other plotlines which could be told in a second season. Perhaps Lisa will have a boyfriend, or even a girlfriend, and family conflicts may erupt, changing this from a happy [family-friendly series](#) into a more mature one.

Even so, it is likely, more than not, that a second season would [continue](#) to portray a loving Black family, and have additional sci-fi elements, which the creators [said](#) they incorporated into the series the best they could. When asked about another season, one of the co-creators said he would like to [focus](#) on Tess and "give her a shot in the captain's seat."

Furthermore, since the first season of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* [was said](#) to be a "love letter to animation, science fiction, and Black families" rolled into a wild action-comedy, it is possible that another season would go even further. There is a lot which can be done with animation, unlike any other medium, which makes it apt for storytelling. Of course, not every animated series is superb, and some are subpar. But, when animation is done well, it shines like nothing else. This series shines.

This series is unique, even on Netflix. While the streaming platform hosts shows like *Princess Power*, *Ada Twist Scientist*, *Dogs in Space*, *Hilda*, *The Dragon Prince*, *Bee and Puppycat*, and *Dragon Age: Absolution*, nothing even comes close to this series. The same can be said for the upcoming *Agent Elvis* and *Mulligan*.

The only comparison with this series is on other streaming platforms, specifically in the Star Wars franchise, a flagship grounding Disney+ in the streaming wars. Perhaps, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is being used to compete with those series. Although, if that is the case, it would be absurd, since the other series are much longer lived, and likely have more money behind them.

In the end, while *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is not my favorite series ever, I thoroughly enjoyed watching it and I'd recommend it, as it can be watched in its entirety during a morning, or an afternoon.

My Dad the Bounty Hunter is currently streaming on Netflix.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★★
4.5	
★★★★★	

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Chapter 6: My Dad the Bounty Hunter Season 2 Spoiler-Filled Review



My Dad the Bounty Hunter is a coming-of-age animated sci-fi adventure series by Everett Downing Jr. and Patrick Harpin. It is a continuation [from the first season](#), which came out in February. It comes at a time when Black-centered animations are blossoming. This piece was written during the 2023 WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. Without the labor of the writers and actors currently on strike, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*, being reviewed here, wouldn't exist.

The second season of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* picks up where the last one left off. Sean (voiced by JeCobi Swain) tells a story about his space adventures in class. Lisa (voiced by Priah Ferguson) acts like know-at-all to her science teacher. She declares that their dying planet and slow technology growth will ensure that outer space exploration is impossible. Their mother, Tess (voiced by Yvonne Orji) comes to school, learning that the school administrators see Sean as a genius, but they see Lisa as a problem student. She talks to her husband, Terry (voiced by Laz Alonso), who is working at a shoe store, telling him they shouldn't keep secrets. Everything goes awry when a bounty hunter captures him, which she, Sean, and Lisa see, traumatizing them.

And that is only the first episode. This season throws you right into the action with new characters like Blobby (voiced by Patrick Harpin), a scammer extraterrestrial who was once captured by Terry in his bounty hunter persona of "Sabo." Later, Tess puts herself, and her kids, in danger. She travels in Glorlox's stolen ship to a nearby prison. She hopes that Terry is imprisoned there, while there's an active bounty on her head. There are typical sci-fi elements like space warping and laser battles. Scenes in the space restaurant Bucky Quantos and A.I. like

KRS (voiced by Yvette Nicole Brown) enhance this. The quick action and exciting plot make the series even more engaging. It draws you into the animation, [by Dwarf Animation Studio](#), which has a smooth 3-D style.

The Conglomerate, officially known as Endless Horizons Conglomerate, are still the villains. With the death of The Fixer in the first season, Pam (voiced by Chelsea Peretti) is the organization's new CEO. However, there is a twist. The Conglomerate is not holding Terry in their prison. Pam claims to investors that the Conglomerate is trying to become "socially conscious." She boasts about reported rehabilitation of criminals to make them "productive" corporate slaves. She further champions the new food options at the ever-popular Bucky Quantos restaurant. The Conglomerate's changes ensure the restaurant is no longer a "glorious palace of meat and grease and cholesterol," as one character puts it. Instead, Pam declares that Conglomerate will connect people, and the universe, with warp gates. She is assisted by robot enforcers, such as Beta (voiced by Mara Junot), who calls Pam "the Creator."

This series reminds me of *Okja*. The 2017 film mixes the science-fantasy and action-adventure genres. Directed [by Bong Joon-ho](#), also known for *Parasite* and *Snowpiercer*, the Mirando Corporation are the villains. The corporation has a similar goal to the Conglomerate. They plan to raise genetically modified super pigs to [sell meat](#) to the masses. However, when they kidnap one pig, Okja, its owner, Mija, a young South Korean girl, tries to get it back. She is helped by an animal liberation group to rescue Okja. The group plans to reveal the corporation's misdeeds to the world. Obviously, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is different from *Okja*, which [focuses](#) on the horrors of the food industry. Both have a strongly anti-corporate message even as they are on the streaming platform of Netflix, a conglomerate of its own.

Coming back to *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*, the second season shares similarities with space operas in the Star Wars franchise, like the third episode. In that episode, the fissures between the family members come to the surface. For one, Sean and Lisa can't enter the casino because they are kids. Only adults are allowed in. Secondly, Tess admits she grew up in constant danger when she was younger but doesn't want to talk about it, making Lisa suspicious. Thirdly, Sean begins to bond with Blobby, and Blobby with Lisa. She gives him tips on playing galactic poker. The episode hints at what is to come. The Widowmaker (voiced by Ralph Ineson) reveals that the Doloraam High Council kidnapped Terry. This terrifies Tess, confusing Sean and Lisa as to her reaction. She is implied to be non-human.

The third episode was the first time I had laughed during the season. The mother of Philip, a cat-faced creature, embarrasses him. She forces him to apologize for insulting Tess. It is moments like that which make me like the series even better. However, at other points, dramatic elements are more emphasized than the comedic ones.

The fourth episode continues directly from the third. The Afrofuturist themes come to the fore. This season is more Afrofuturist than [the first](#) season. The Doloraami royalty are revealed: Emperor Odoman (voiced by Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje) and Empress Gurira (voiced by Janet Hubert). Odoman towers above Terry, on the coliseum floor, and conducts the trial against him. Terry gets a sleazy public defender named Ja Boluu. Boluu's voice actor, Godfrey, previously voiced [Kofi in *Steven Universe*](#). Kofi is a stern, and somewhat authoritarian patriarch, of the Pizza family in Beach City, and owner of the family business. While Boluu is different from Kofi, there are other comparisons between *Steven Universe* and this series.

In both series, the protagonist is on trial. In *Steven Universe*, Steven is on trial for his mother's crimes (killing a Diamond). He is accused of being his mother because of the pink diamond in his belly. (Blue) Zircon [defends](#) him. She finds a flaw in the Diamonds' case. She accuses them of being complicit. As a result, Yellow Diamond poofs her. The trial in *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is quite different. Emperor Odoman charges Terry with spacecraft theft, assaulting a royal guard, and abducting Sa Janeera, princess of Doloraam. Also, his public defender has wronged many people.

As it turns out, Tess is Sa Janeera. Terry acts surprised, but likely knew already. Unlike Steven in *Steven Universe*, who barely escapes the all-powerful Diamonds, Terry goes through tribulations of fire to annul his guilty sentence. The pompous B'Caala (voiced by Keith David), a [Prince-like](#) cat man who desires political power, tries to make a deal. He suggests that Terry narc on Tess. He refuses. Terry loves and cares about her. This refusal shows his loyalty to her.

Viewers who watch this series may see similarities to *Black Panther* and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, which have Afrofuturist themes. However, Africanfuturist animations [like *Kizazi Moto*](#), or futuristic elements [in *Supa Team 4*](#) are more apt. *Black Panther* [has been criticized](#) for embodying police habits and tendencies. Some have said it sanitizes "cop behavior and brand it as heroism." In contrast, the main characters in *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*, like Tess and Terry, are on the run from bounty hunters. They are the furthest thing from cops. This series doesn't have copaganda, even though the Kingdom has [a retributive justice](#) system.



One of the major themes in *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* is the importance and value of family. Those ties are tested in this season. Lisa is annoyed that Tess is keeping secrets from her. She ignores Sean's warning about not knowing the full story. This comes to a head in the fifth episode. Adja ([voiced](#) by Thando Thabethe) claims Tess made the "wrong" choice in leaving Doloraam. Although this is hurtful, it is nothing compared to Beta kidnapping Lisa and Sean. Tess loses it. She is paralyzed, unsure of her next steps. The credits further emphasize this by not having a music track. This encourages audience members to sympathize with Tess.

These themes mesh with Sean and Lisa's connections to their Doloraami roots. Tess also unlocks her long-forgotten Doloraami powers, allowing her to defeat Beta. Interlinking to one's ancestral identity is not unique to this series. For instance, [the Kizazi Moto](#) episode/films "Mkhuzi: The Spirit Racer" and "Hatima" emphasize similar themes, as does the lackluster episode/film "First Totem Problems." Similarly, Carmen Sandiego, in the series of the same name, [investigates her Argentinian roots](#) in an important sub-theme of that series. In addition, *Amphibia* and *The Ghost and Molly McGee* incorporate Thai culture into the storylines, with the protagonists [examining](#) their parentage and ancestry.

Like other nations in Black speculative fiction, Doloraam has independence to make its own decisions. Pam detests this. It puts her plan to seize the planet's crystals, known as Kalatite, in jeopardy. Like in the *Kizazi Moto* episode/film "Herderboy," with herding of cattle to gain

crystals, to power their society, the Kalatite crystals are the foundation of their society. They are sacred and have been in hands of the Doloraami people for generations. It makes sense that the Conglomerate would work with B'Caala in hopes that the royal council will agree to the Conglomerate's terms. Even though the council is unaware of B'Caala's treachery, they are rightly skeptical of the Conglomerate. They worry whether they will be kings or if the Conglomerate will have control instead.

The Conglomerate doesn't put all their eggs in one basket. Pam develops a plan which aims to achieve the Conglomerate's goals. There is a huge demonstration of the "good" that can come from warp portals. This does not convince the royal council. As a result, Pam later grumbles that she is tired of being nice. This implies that she will soon show her "true" nature. Her expression changes after learning that Sean, Lisa, and Tess are royalty. She believes that returning them to Doloraam will cause the royal council to vote in favor of the Conglomerate. This is a major miscalculation.

Odoman and Gurira are glad to see Tess, and meet Lisa and Sean. Terry is freed, after Tess confronts her parents about his kidnapping. B'Caala is tossed aside like a used dishrag. Pam says that because she brought back Tess, she doesn't need him. To make matters worse, his tribe no longer recognizes his sovereignty, after he beats up Terry in a fight. His removal from the royal bloodline dashes his attempt to seize political power. B'Caala is further crest-fallen by Tess's marriage to Terry.

Pam cares little about B'Caala. She only wants the deal with the royal council so she can exploit the citizenry, like any imperialist. She does not want to get involved in leadership squabbles. The royal council gives Pam a container with gold bars for her trouble. At the same time, they reject the Conglomerate's proposal. Gurira says that they cannot, "in good conscience," accept it. She argues that the Kalatite crystals are part of the Kingdom, as are the people and their family. The Conglomerate's real plan manifests itself at the end of seventh episode. Their full-scale invasion almost resembles tactics of [the Galactic Empire](#) in the Star Wars franchise. The latter wants order and stability, [while cracking down](#) on any who disobeys.

The season's last two episodes involve the struggle against the Conglomerate. It is revealed that Doloraam is not defenseless. A shield protecting the city is activated, as are cannons to fire at invaders. An arsenal of weapons is also revealed. During this fight, Lisa connects with the Kalatite. She fights alongside Adja in the city, calming Tess's worries. Blobby and Sean work

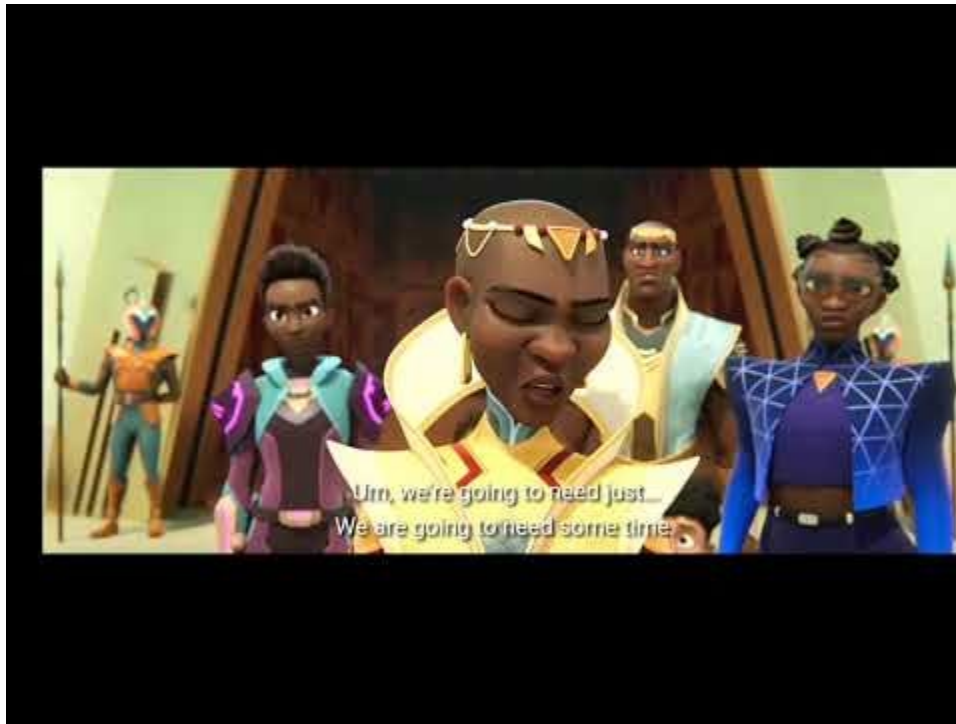
together to shut down the portal which is providing the Conglomerate with additional forces for their assault. In a scene akin to an Imperial cruiser [falling](#) toward Ryloth, in the *Star Wars Rebels* episode "Homecoming," the portal's closure slices a Conglomerate ship in half. The end is near. Despite this, Pam desperately attempts to finish the plan, at any cost.

The final episode of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* wraps up everything, almost too nicely. The robots accelerate their extraction of Kalatite crystals. Pam has not learned the lesson that [Elena](#) ([in *Elena of Avalor*](#)) and Lunella Lafayette [in *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*](#) made abundantly clear: speeding up the timeline only leads to disaster. Glorlox and his crew gives a helping hand, as does B'Caala. He informs Tess about Pam's location. In a conversation with her, he reveals that he wanted to rule the planet, not see it destroyed. Following this is a great hand-to-hand combat scene between Pam and Tess. She pulls out Pam's neural link, implying that the ship she was piloting the ship remotely, like the robots. Of course, this isn't the end.

Tess fights Pam in a battle in a creepy swamp. The true form of Pam is revealed to be a huge alligator-like monster. Tess barely wins the battle. She is heavily injured, and Terry, Sean, and Lisa save her just in time. The fast-forward that follows is typical of many animations, either films or series. *Kipo and the Age of the Wonderbeasts* had one in the final episode as did [Nimona](#) in the end of that film.

The fruits of their victory are apparent. Tess ([wearing boots](#) made from Pam's skin) hangs out with her family, her mother (voiced by Leslie Uggams), her friend Adja, and other compatriots on Earth. Everyone bonds. Lisa agrees to show Adja (who has a crush on Glorlox) around Earth. Blobby works with Sean to turn his story into a movie. There is a good, but untrue, quip from Blobby about how "all the good books" get turned into movies.

The series ends on a slice-of-life note. All of them play football together. However, a cliffhanger post-credits scene, which shows a warp gate activating, and a ship passing through, hints at a possible continuation. However, a lack of continuation for *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* would not leave fans hankering for more, as they do [with *High Guardian Spice*](#), which has which raises more questions than answers. While the central conflict in the final episodes ended too quickly, the second season finale is perfect. I'm afraid that having another season would ruin that ending for fans and others alike.



In my [season one](#) review, I noted that the series impressed me. I described the animation and voice actors as top notch, praised the music selection, and noted that many voice actors were well-known. I also compared the series to episodes of *Dogs in Space*, [Cleopatra in Space](#), *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*, and contrasted it with more mature themes [in Helluva Boss](#) and *Invincible*. Those insights still ring true. New characters like Blobby bring more humor to the series. Joshua Mosley's score for the series, often including rap or hip-hop music, can make you excited to watch more.

The voice actors of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* are a diverse bunch. JeCobi Swain has been in the entertainment industry since at least 2016. He has voiced characters in *Eureka!* and *Firebuds*. In contrast, Priah Ferguson, well-known for her role in the 1980s nostalgia trip known as *Stranger Things*, voiced Bailey in the subpar animated series, *Hamster & Gretel*. Yvonne Orji has range as evidenced by the fact that she also voices Gigi [in Velma](#).

Laz Alonso has worked in the entertainment industry since early 2000s. His voice role in this series is one of his first voice roles, apart from some characters in *Robot Chicken*. Patrick Harpin, who is also this show's creator and a storyboard artist, provided his voice to characters in two Hotel Transylvania films. Yvette Nicole Brown has been very prolific in her voice acting. Brown voiced characters in *Strange Planet*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, *Dogs in Space*, *Fairfax*, and many others.

Voice actors Chelsea Peretti, Mara Junot, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Janet Hubert, Keith David, Thando Thabethe, Leslie Uggams, and Ralph Ineson are just as talented as those previously listed. This series also features Venice May Wong (also called Venice Wong) as Halvey, a friend of Sean and Lisa. Apart from her role in this series, Peretti recently voiced Queenie in *Adventure Time: Fiona and Cake*. Junot voiced Shoola [in *Arcane*](#). Akinnuoye-Agbaje is known for providing his voice for Bilal in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*. David has voiced characters in *Firebuds*, [The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder](#), *Final Space*, *DuckTales*, and *Young Justice*. In contrast, this series is one of the first voice roles for Hubert, Thabethe, Uggams, Ineson, and Wong.

The show's cast is stellar, making the characters more relatable. The series is geared toward a Black audience and designed for families. This can draw people in, even those who prefer 2-D animation over 3-D animation. Those who watch it may connect with the messages, social commentary, or other aspects. They may also enjoy the show writing of Harpin, Downing, Justin Gordon-Montgomery, Shakira Pressley, Ryan Harer, or Tomi Adeyemi.

Gordon-Montgomery previously directed episodes of *DC Super Hero Girls* and storyboarded *High Guardian Spice* and *Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure* episodes. Pressley wrote for *Craig of the Creek*. Harer was a script coordinator for *Centaurworld* and *Middle School Moguls*. Adeyemi is a Nigerian-American writer best known for her Legacy of Orisha trilogy of young adult fantasy novels, which [have Afrofuturist themes](#). All these people comprised [the majority-Black writers room](#) for the series.

Overall, the series is fun to watch. It is almost as fun as some *Cleopatra of Space* episode. In my season one review I said that series was unique and shined. I described it as "not my favorite series ever." In contrast, I enjoyed the second season even more. There are many more series to compare it to now than there was in February. My predictions that the series will explore more about family dynamics and conflicts proved correct, as did the portrayal of a "loving Black family."

However, Lisa did not have a boyfriend or a girlfriend in this season. In fact, neither Lisa nor Sean had romantic connections to anyone else. I think this is purposeful. In fact, Sean cares more about the fate of Beta, and the control she has over her body, than any person, apart from his family and friends. Sadly, the dearth of fan fiction for this series on AO3 or Fanfiction.net makes views of fans on this subject unknown.

As I say with every show that drops on the same day, I would have preferred 1-2 episodes of *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* air every week. The same "binge" model has been followed for *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, *Supa Team 4*, *Carmen Sandiego*, and latest season [of *Disenchantment*](#). Hopefully, future series will follow the lead of anime and release only one to two episodes per week.

I liked the emphasis on storytelling, as shown through Sean wanting to tell his own tall tales, and trying to be true to himself. The latter has a parallel in Blobby reuniting with his other half in the sixth episode. It echoes how *Steven Universe* reunited with Pink Steven in the *Steven Universe* series finale, "Change Your Mind". Watching this season was worth it. I was glad I did so because this season is [more Afrofuturist](#) than the first season, as it addresses concerns and themes of the African diaspora through its speculative fiction and technoculture.

I'm glad I remembered that *My Dad the Bounty Hunter* even had a second season because I only was reminded when reading social media posts from fans about it. Unfortunately, mainstream reviewers seem to have ignored [the second season's](#) release. Despite the fact there are reviews out there, an online search indicated that major sites like *The A.V. Club*, *IGN*, *Los Angeles Times*, *CBR*, and *The Hollywood Reporter* have not penned reviews for the show's second season. I'm not sure the exact reason, apart from unconscious racism, but it does this show a disservice in many ways.



At present, the series is [on hiatus](#). Its fate [has not](#) been determined. Fans on social media have praised the series as awesome, fun, sweet, beautiful, incredible, and enjoyed the attention to detail. Netflix also deserves criticism for not marketing the series, leaving that job to the fans and creators ([and crew](#)). It is a clear insult. On the other hand, the release of this series shows that original stories matter.

My Dad the Bounty Hunter comes out at a time that negotiations to end the strikes of writers and actors are ongoing, with no agreement in sight. Wildbrain's workers [have said](#) they are moving to form a union and the animation industry [is under strain](#), with work drying up and studios cutting back on employment. Dwarf Animation Studios is not mentioned on a recently-circulated spreadsheet noting conditions [within animation studios](#). Some reviews on Glassdoor [were positive](#), describing it as having a good company culture. Others noted it can be disorganized or were more critical.

It is not known if Netflix will renew the series for another season. This series comes at an apt time, since many other Black animations are being released nowadays. It is worth checking out, despite Netflix's lack of promotion and mainstream reviewers completely ignoring the second season's release.

My Dad the Bounty Hunter can be streamed on Netflix.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★☆
4.8	
★★★★★	

Chapter 7: Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur Spoiler-Filled Review



Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur, also called *Marvel's Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* or *Moon Girl*, is an animated superhero adventure series created by Laurence Fishburne and Helen Sugland. It is based on the 2010s Marvel Comics series, *Moon Girl*, by Brandon Montclare, Amy Reeder, and Natacha Bustos.

The plot of *Moon Girl* centers on a young girl named Lunella Lafayette (voiced by Diamond White). She is secretly a superhero named Moon Girl, named after her favorite scientist, and a student by day. She uses a dimensional portal to bring a T-Rex named Devil Dinosaur (voiced by Fred Tatasciore), to the streets of New York City. Her best friend, Casey (voiced by Libe Barer) helps her, while she fights against villains like The Beyonder, a mischievous and curious trickster voiced by Fishburne.

Lunella's family have an important role in this series. Her grandmother Mimi, mother Andria, father James Jr., and grandfather "Pops" are protagonists. They are voiced by acclaimed actors such as Alfre Woodward, Sasheer Zamata, Jermaine Fowler, and Gary Anthony Williams. I personally remembered Williams for voicing characters in *Star Wars Rebels*, [Star Wars Resistance](#), [Velma](#), *The Cuphead Show!*, and [The Owl House](#), or when Zamata voiced Jade in the subpar film, *The Mitchells vs. the Machines*.

From the get-go, I knew that *Moon Girl* would have a superb animation quality because the show's production companies include the animation arm of Disney (Disney Television Animation), a Marvel Studios subsidiary (Marvel Animation), and two animation studios: Titmouse and Flying Bark Productions. The latter two are known for [Star Trek: Lower Decks](#), *Fairfax*, *The Legend of Vox Machina*, *Glitch Techs*, *What If...?* and *Pantheon*.

Fishburne's own production company, Cinema Gypsy Productions, is helping produce *Moon Girl*. This could be part of the reason the series got a favorable reception from executives, resulting in [renewal](#) of a second season before the first season had premiered. The animation style [is said](#) to be inspired by *Spider-Verse*, pop art such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol, and Keith Haring, along with comic book and graffiti style, and other influences.

Moon Girl has an impressive cast including [well-recognized names](#) like Indya Moore, Craig Robinson, Pamela Adlon, Jennifer Hudson, Anna Akana, and Asia Kate Dillon. It includes actors of Indian, Iranian, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, and Palestinian descent.

This is reinforced by executive producer Steve Loter, composer Raphael Saadiq, and producers Pilar Flynn and Rafael Chaidez. Loter is an executive producer of *The Ghost and Molly McGee* and has been recognized as a former [Kim Possible](#) producer. Saadiq previously did the discography for *Lovecraft Country* Season 1. Flynn was co-producer of *Elena of Avalor*.

Show director Trey Buongiorno has previously been a storyboarder on *Glitch Techs* and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. Samantha Suyi Lee storyboarded on [Cleopatra in Space](#), Christine Liu on *Steven Universe*, Rodney Clouden on *Futurama*, and Ben Juwono on *Big Hero 6*. Show writers Jeffrey M. Howard, Kate Kondell, Halima Lucas, Liz Hara, Taylor Vaughn Lasley, Maggie Rose, and Lisa Muse Bryant have written for *Elena of Avalor*, *Rugrats*, *Sesame Street*, *Broad City*, and *Kenan*.

The cast and crew of *Moon Girl* support the series' aim to be something for "everyone" and have tones of "heart...comedy, incredible action and great music" as Loter [put it](#). What he is saying has validity since the series is clearly [smart](#), punchy, dynamic, dazzling, and [enchanting](#), with a unique personality.



Representation in *Moon Girl* is central to the show's storyline. In [an interview](#) with the show's producers in February 2023, Loter noted that the show started with Laurence Fishburne loving the Marvel's *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* comic series because he had read the original late 1970s *Devil Dinosaur* comic. Supervising producer [Rodney Clouden](#) said that it "means a lot" for the series to have the first Black female protagonist in a superhero series by Marvel.

Later in the interview, Clouden added that Lunella is more than young Black girl into science and math, but is about helping her community and family. This is because her brains are her superpowers, not any other special abilities. She is a 13-year-old who has teen problems that are relatable, and universal. This is done with the intention of making the series inspirational and creating "sophisticated and elevated children's program", to summarize Clouden's words.

There is more beyond the interview with Loter and Clouden. Like [The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder](#), [Craig of the Creek](#), or [My Dad the Bounty Hunter](#), the series has a Black-majority main cast. *Moon Girl* is different than those two series, in that it is centered on superheroes. There are very few other Black superhero animated series, apart from three prominent series, either [Vixen](#) in the 2010s, [Static Shock](#) in the 2000s, or *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* in the 1990s. [Various](#) additional Black cartoons aired since the 1970s, but few are in the superhero genre.

Moon Girl has outward LGBTQ representation. This includes Lunella's classmate, Tai, and living/A.I. supercomputer named LOS-307, which are both non-binary, and Brooklyn, an openly trans character. Furthermore, Casey has two dads: Isaac and Antonio.

The voice actors for Tai and LOS-307, Ian Alexander and Asia Kate Dillon, are non-binary in real life, while Indya Moore, the voice of Brooklyn, is trans and non-binary. In addition, Wilson Cruz and Andy Cohen, who voice Casey's dads, are both gay actors. It remains to be seen if any of the main cast will be shown as LGBTQ or not. Some fans have seen hints of romantic attraction between Casey and Lunella, shipping them either as "Lucasey" or "Mediamoon", but ship this has not been confirmed presently. Furthermore, it is possible that since Michael Cimino, who voices Lunella's loud friend, Eduardo, has [seemed](#) to say his sexual identity is fluid, this may be reflected in his character.

In watching *Moon Girl*, I was reminded by the fact that Moore previously voiced a trans character in animation (Shep in [Steven Universe Future](#)). Recently, Dillon provided the voice for the genderfluid and pansexual Val/entina Romanyszyn in the ever-controversial and problematic [gen:LOCK](#). This series appears to be the first voice role for Cohen, but not for Alexander or Cruz.

This is not unique to Moore and Dillion. Diamond White has provided her voice for characters in *Phineas and Ferb* and *Sofia the First*. Tatasciore has voiced characters in animated series since the 1990s. Fowler prominently did voices for *Tuca & Bertie* and *BoJack Horseman*. Others have voiced characters in wide-ranging series including [We Bare Bears](#), *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, [Mira, Royal Detective](#), [The Simpsons](#), and [Hamster & Gretel](#).



The show's first episode began with a bang and pulled me in almost immediately. I've been lamenting the reality that few present series have roller-skating protagonists. This could be because wearing such shoes seem [almost retro](#) these days. It is part of Lunella's shtick, as she skates around fighting villains with the help of her dinosaur (Devil), using her gadgets for good.

Having a protagonist move around in roller skates puts in her good company alongside protagonists such as Sakura Kinomoto in *Cardcaptor Sakura* and Candace Flynn in [Phineas and Ferb](#). Occasionally Kim Possible of *Kim Possible* and Milo Murphy in *Milo Murphy's Law* wear them. The same is the case for characters in the *Steven Future Universe* episode "Bismuth", possibly Jenny /XJ-9 in *My Life as a Teenage Robot*, and more directly, [Neon Katt](#) as shown in some *RWBY* volumes.

What further endeared me to *Moon Girl* was [the setting](#), in New York's Lower East Side, and character's relatability. In the 44-minute first episode, Lunella almost abandons being a superhero, after Devil is seriously injured by Aftershock. She is reassured on her path by her wise grandmother, Mimi (voiced by Alfre Woodard). The latter makes even more sense after the revelation in the season one finale that Mimi knew that Lunella was Moon Girl the entire time!

I can see how *Moon Girl* is like the musical coming-of-age comedy, *Karma's World*, created by rapper Ludacris. Both series emphasize the importance of community, family, and history. The latter is manifested within *Moon Girl* with blending of the old with the new. Moon Girl uses

a cassette player as a device. The show's fight scenes featured music which fits perfectly with the story and action, while in keeping with the series style. As a person who enjoys interacting with "[analog](#)" technology, or possibly soon-to-be analog (CDs and DVDs), I liked this part of the story.

The series has similarities [with](#) *Karma's World* and *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* when it comes to episodes about the dangers of fighting online trolls, and themes of cooperation (rather than competition), friendship, self-acceptance, patience, and [Black girl's hair](#). One episode even echoes the "Sugar Rush" episode of *Elena of Avalor*. Lunella speeds up tasks because they are taking "too long", reminding me of Elena using her powers to speed up the making of chocolate desserts. Another episode slightly mirrors *Steven Universe* finale "Change Your Mind" where Steven [fuses with himself](#) (Pink Steven), when Lunella comes back together with her hair, Mane (voiced by Jennifer Hudson), promising to take care of it.

Moon Girl has recurring villain-of-sorts, as noted earlier. He is one of the most playful characters I've seen in animation and is named the Beyonder. He is not conniving like Cece Dupree [in Karma's World](#) or downright evil such as [Salem in RWBY](#). He can be playful and fun, but can do a lot from the snap of a finger. In fact, he even threatens to destroy all of humanity in the show's seventh episode, unless Lu "proves" to him that humanity is worth saving.

In another, he kidnaps Lunella's mother and Casey, threatening to send them to another dimension, where she will never see them again. He never considers how his actions will [cause trauma](#), only claiming that what he is doing is "helping" her, which is questionable. Hopefully, Lunella doesn't have a meltdown like Ruby Rose in Volume 9 of *RWBY*, who takes her own life, or Steven Universe in *Steven Universe Future* [who becomes](#) a monster.

The ninth episode of *Moon Girl* mirrored some plot points in the classic *Futurama* episode "Time Keeps Slippin'" and the more-recent *Cleopatra in Space* episode "[Do-Over](#)". In all three cases, skipping forward in time goes horribly wrong, but with completely [different results](#). In the case of *Moon Girl*, the episode points to the [dangers of A.I.](#), as shown by the Skipster App, and hints at possible future scenes in the show's second season.

The value of a work-life balance is emphasized through Lunella faking a sickness to get out of a photoshoot. This reminds me of the *Cleopatra in Space* episode "Cleopatra Needs Space". The difference is that Lunella lies to her friend Casey, claiming she cannot get out of bed so she can have a break, while Cleo wants to get away from her two friends who are flirting with one

another. However, *Moon Girl* doesn't as directly counter the issues with overwork, making it different, in that regard, from the isekai anime, *I've Been Killing Slimes for 300 Years and Maxed Out My Level*, which emphasizes this theme repeatedly.

I further enjoyed the episode in which Lu rallies her community against the Muzzlers, two White home inventors, who are trying to gentrify the Lower East Side. The episode examines [gentrification](#) as much the Season 2 finale or three-part Season 4 finale of *Karma's World*, both of which approach the topic in their own ways. *Moon Girl* is more poignant on this topic than the construction by the golf-addicted Mafia [in Birdie Wing](#), in which the protagonist's family are evicted, or that shown [in City of Ghosts](#).



The last few *Moon Girl* episodes, which focus on value of chosen family, facing your fears, and being perfect the way you are, strongly end the first season. These episodes also center plotlines about Jewish traditions (since Casey is part Jewish) and the issues with [clout-chasing](#). The latter is somewhat reflected in certain episodes of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder*.

The two-part season one finale of *Moon Girl* is unique. The villain, Maris Morlak (voiced by Wesley Snipes), wants to construct a dimensional portal so he can gain recognition for his contributions from White leaders, which are those with authority.

Maris reveals that his work, and that of Lu's grandmother, Mimi, were ignored by their White bosses, with White scientists taking all the credit when speaking to the U.S. military generals.

This story of casual and institutional racism is more relevant than ever, with White supremacy currently running rampant across society. I liked how even though Mimi disagrees with his method (opening the portal), she agrees with his concerns, but says he doesn't need others to validate him.

The actions of Maris go beyond the actions taken by other series villains, such as the Rat King, Abyss, Gravitas, and Odessa Drake. He has an army of followers to support him, called the Enclave, and is willing to do anything to achieve his goals. In fact, he is probably the most ruthless villain of the series, destroying Lunella's [underground lab](#), even when Devil is trapped inside, causing Lunella to drop to her knees and think Devil died. Although this is not the case, it undoubtedly deepens Lunella's growing trauma, which may be addressed more in season 2.

The first season of *Moon Girl* ends on a cliffhanger, with Mimi and Lu turning off the dimensional portal from each side. It could possibly provide fuel for crossover fan fiction to be written by dedicated fans. The second season of *Moon Girl* may feature more of S.H.I.E.L.D. and its Agent, Maria Hill (voiced by Cobie Smulders), tying the series more into the Marvel Universe.

The growing friendship between Lunella and Casey will likely be an important part of the next season. By the end of the season, Casey becomes almost becoming the equivalent of Tomoyo Daidouji [in Cardcaptor Sakura](#), who made all of Sakura Kinomoto's Cardcaptor outfits. This is because Casey made the outfits that Lunella used as a superhero. In addition, it is possible that the Beyonder will have a bigger role in the next season, and there be more fourth wall breaks. The series might even have a storyline akin to the *OK K.O.* episode "Your World Is an Illusion", in which K.O. realizes that his whole world is an illusion.

Moon Girl fills the void left by the season 2 finales of *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* on February 1 and [Star Wars: The Bad Batch](#) on March 29, and the series finales of [The Owl House](#) (on April 8) and [Amphibia](#) in May 2022. Unfortunately, with the last episode of *Moon Girl* airing on the Disney Channel on May 6, it may be some time before any other series with as strong plot, characters, animation, and writing airs on Disney+ or other Disney-related platforms.

Although [Kiff](#) and [Hamster & Gretel](#) have their merits, as do any of the other animated series on Disney+ or Disney Channel, none of them measures up to *Moon Girl*, or the quality of *The Bad Batch*, *Amphibia*, and *The Owl House*. The same may be the case for upcoming series such

as *Hailey's On It!*, *Primos*, *Iwaju*, *Cookies & Milk*, *Tiana*, or *Moana: The Series*, something which can only be proven or disproven after said series begins airing.

Although the episode-dumps on Disney+, the equivalent of [Stevenbombs](#), undoubtedly reduced the possible audience, *Moon Girl* remains a shining example of a recent animated series. It can be enjoyed by all, even though it is primarily aimed at children. It is for that, and reasons I have previously stated, I recommend this series and look forward to the second season.

Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur is currently airing on Disney+.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★☆
Story	★★★★★
4.8	
★★★★★	

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Chapter 8: Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire Spoiler-Filled Review



Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire, known as *Kizazi Moto* for short, is an Africanfuturist animated film anthology series. It is the second animated series produced by a South African animation studio, Triggerfish. It follows *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes*, which premiered on Disney+ earlier this year. Peter Ramsey is the executive producer. Tendayi Nyeke and Anthony Silverston join him as supervising producers. Shofela Coker, Raymond Malinga, and Ahmed Teilab developed the series. As a warning, this review will discuss death, blood, suicide, and other related themes. This piece was written during the 2023 WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. Without the labor of the writers and actors currently on strike, *Kizazi Moto*, being reviewed here, wouldn't exist.

Unlike some other series, *Kizazi Moto* is a bit hard to describe. While each of the ten short films within [this series](#) clearly has an African perspective, [told](#) by one or more directors, the themes of each episode can be vastly different. The music, animation style, writing, and everything else can also differ. Sometimes, it feels like the sinew holding the series together is not as strong as it could be. Even so, each film stands on its own, with many providing a possible starting point for future animated series.

To understand where the series stands, it is important to have some background about the genre. This series is [outwardly](#) Africanfuturist. In the reporting, before the series released, [some media outlets](#) incorrectly described it as "Afrofuturist." These two genres are not the same.

Afrofuturism, which is well-known as a genre, explores intersection of science and technology with the African diaspora, addressing concerns and themes of that diaspora. The term was coined in 1993 by White male cultural critic Mark Dery. This has led some to use broader terms like "Black science fiction" and "Black speculative fiction" or [embrace](#) the term "Africanfuturism".

Africanfuturism centers on fusion of African mythology, history, culture, technology, and point of view, within Africa itself. Nigerian-American writer Nnedi Okorafor coined the term [in 2019](#). She described it as a sci-fi sub-category deeply rooted in "African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view" which does not center or privilege Western countries, while retaining optimistic future visions. It is also, in her description, written and centered on people who are of African descent, and rooted in Africa. As such, it can also include the African diaspora.

While there has been more Africanfuturist literature, and comics, in recent years, there are very few films. One such film [put](#) in the genre (by some) is *Black Panther*. Others have included *Pumzi* and *Ratnik*, along with Okorafor's *Binti* and *Who Fears Death*, which are getting live-action series adaptations. Even so, there are no currently ongoing Africanfuturist series. As such, *Kizazi Moto* may prove vital to the possibility of future series in the genre. It will only join the ranks of series in development, like *Iwájú*, created by a Pan-African British company, Kugali Media, in collaboration with Walt Disney Animation Studios.

As such, *Kizazi Moto* differs from [My Dad the Bounty Hunter](#), the upcoming *Dantai* (produced by Idris Elba and Sabrina Dhowre). The still-in-production *Iyanu: Child of Wonder* (releasing in 2024) may include some Afrofuturist, or Africanfuturist, elements. More common examples of Afrofuturism include music of R&B/pop/funk/hip hop/soul musician Janelle Monáe and R&B/soul/hip hop musician Erykah Badu.

The first episode/film of this series, "Herderboy," features artful, colorful, and amazing animation. It is coupled with impactful voice acting and fitting music. The story of a wanna-be hero, Ndahura (voiced by Koona Blair Matthias "Wonders"), is typical. Some characters are speaking [Yoruba](#) (voiced by people in Benin, Nigeria, and Togo). The beast, a Nyamiyonga (voiced by Jon Olson), feeds off negative energy. Both are unique. It is unlike any other series I've seen. There aren't any simple naming conventions, like the original world of the Diamonds in *Steven Universe* called "Homeworld," rather than something more creative. The herding of cattle to gain crystals, [known as chwezinite](#), to power their society shows the sci-fi nature of the

episode. What really caps off this episode are the amazing action sequences and compelling characters.

The [episode](#)/film is directed, and written, by Raymond Malinga. Mpho Osei-Tutu does other writing. I was unfamiliar with any of the voice actors, either Florence Kasumba (voiced Ndahura's sister, Captain Katono), Idringi Patrick "Salvado" (voice of somewhat technology adverse Dushiime), or Omara Daniel (voiced of robot Isingoma).

The second episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*, "Mkhuzi: The Spirit Racer," is unlike the first. It focuses on racing. The episode/film is set in a futuristic city where some speak Zulu. The racing scenes are fluid. They fit with characters jumping across the screen, garnering the viewer's attention. Unlike the first episode/film, this episode/film focuses on the importance of family, culture (being Zulu), and ancestry. The themes of displacement, [gentrification](#), and togetherness are key. The neighborhood where Manzo (voiced by Nasty C) and his mother Manomi (voiced by Carol Ofori) live, is almost demolished by Ogun (voiced by Hakeem Kae-Kazim). He is an intergalactic racing overlord. Manzo only saves it when he takes on his mother's garb as Mkhuzi and becomes all-parts Zulu.

The episode/film had nice upbeat rock music and well-done animation. It has none of the same directors and writers as the first one. Malcolm Wope directed and created it. Simangaliso "Panda" Sibaya was a fellow director. Leslie Pulsfier wrote the episode. Apart from the aforementioned voice actors, I was unfamiliar with Sandi Dlangalala, who voices racer Cosmizi. In some ways, this episode reminded me [of Birdie Wing](#), but that anime is more wild with golf-obsessed Mafia, even more than *The Phantom Menace*, which has a well-known pod racing scene, or similar scenes in [Star Wars Resistance](#).



When it comes to writers, each episode/film had distinct individuals. The animation and writing weren't done in the United States. As such, their studios aren't mentioned on a recently-[circulated spreadsheet](#) noting conditions within animation studios. However, their labor and economic conditions are worth noting. The entertainment industry remains [highly profitable](#). Disney, brought in over \$55 billion to the company's Media and Entertainment Distribution division [in 2022 alone](#). They can clearly pay writers, and actors, what they deserve, and fulfill their demands in the recent strikes. It should be no issue for them at all.

The third episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*, "Moremi," took a quite different tact than the others, making it stand out. In part, this was because it had moderate violence. It artfully combined mystical magical, and sci-fi themes all in one. Like the first episode/film, the Yoruba language is spoken. In some ways, this episode reminded me of the episode in the far-too-short anime *Yasuke* in which the samurai, Yasuke, travels upstream with Saki. A fundamental difference between that series, [focused](#) on the Black experience, is that this episode has character development, depth, and no tonal shifts.

This episode/film focuses on the frailty of the human condition, family togetherness, and the value of one's soul. The protagonist Luo (voiced by Tolowanmi Olaoye), who must recharge himself every day to keep his heart functioning, learns a story from Moremi, the woman who saves him from soul-eating monsters. Moremi (voiced by Kehinde Bankole) tells him that in the

past, the land of Ife was filled with the aforementioned monsters from another realm. She adds that woman built a machine which closed the inter-dimensional gateway between worlds. Of course, even though this woman made an oath to the Gods, she vowed to save her child by any means necessary, even if the monsters returned.

This *Kizazi Moto* episode/film has a touching ending, with Luo merging his life force with the child, Olu. As a result, the monsters depart, and Moremi, the woman from the story, finally can reunite with her child. I can't even think of a series in which a character gives up their soul to save another person. Rapunzel in *Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure* nor *Steven Universe* in the series of the same name has done anything like Luo. The only equivalent I can think of is what happens in the original *Tokyo Mew Mew* manga and the early 2000s anime. Masaya Aoyama uses the Mew Aqua inside of him to not only sacrifices his own life, but that of villainous Deep Blue. This does not happen in [the reboot series](#), which has more of a "[happy ending](#)" than in the original series (or manga).

I wasn't familiar with the episode's director, Shofela Coker, co-writer, Vanessa Kanu, or co-director, Andrew McNally. Coker even voices a character (Malimbe) in this episode/film. Coker is known for his animation and video game work and for [feature films](#) like *Liyana*. [Kanu](#) is a new screenwriter. She is a staff writer on *Supa Team 4*, reportedly the "[first](#) original African animated series" on Netflix. McNally is co-creator [of Isaura](#), a South African animated [film](#) in development. It [focuses](#) on climate change and [environmental](#) conservation, and centers on Mozambique. The same company that made that film, Studio Lucan, [also](#) did the work on this episode. The episode/film, it is inspired by the real mythological story of Yoruba hero Queen Moremi/[Moremi Ajasoro](#) of Ife.

The fourth episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*, "Surf Sangoma", goes in another direction. It's about surfing and finding yourself. It begins in a dark place. The grandmother of the protagonist, Njabulo, is pulled under water by squids. This mortifies her grandson, who tries in vain to save her, but fails. Then, there is a flash forward to the present, where Njabulo is a surfing coach, and he talks to his friend, Mnqobi. In an almost ominous tone, an announcement declares that surfing beyond the wall, which protects the city, is illegal and deadly. Even the high water is said to have caused civil unrest. In a scene, which reminds me of the bike chases in the often-forgotten [Tron: Uprising](#), Mnqobi and Njabulo race one another and find a spot which gets them "over the wall".

This is where the episode becomes horror-like. Locals talk to Njabulo (voiced by Mandisa Nduna) and Mngobi (Omiga Mncube), declaring that they either must surf or leave. Although Njabulo refuses to take part, with his grandmother's voice telling him to avoid the water, Mngobi obliges. All of them have squids, from the water, attached to their heads. This is even worse than [the brain slug](#) in *Futurama*. It's more like the insidious [brain worms](#) in two episodes of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. To make matters worse, Mngobi joins the local surfers and they beat up Njabulo, stealing his board, the last thing he has left of his grandmother.

With an undoubted lesson that people should confront their fears, the voice of Njabulo's grandmother tells him to return to the water. Although the local surfers taunt him, he continues onward. His grandmother saves him from the ravenous squid. She is now part of the ocean. One of the best animated sequences in the episode follows. Njabulo is chased by other surfers, with the music and pace fitting the action. In the end, he is able to rescue his friend.

Perhaps to indicate the world's cruelty, the surfer with malintent, Mlindos (voiced by Carlos Fonseca Mokgata), is brutally killed/subsumed by the squid. Although Njabulo and Mngobi survive, a final scene, which shows a squid, in the water near the former city, roaring, implies a possible continuation. It also indicates that the city may be under direct threat.

This *Kizazi Moto* episode/film must be one of my favorites. Not only do some of the characters talk in Zulu, but the animation is smooth, colorful, and unique, having its own flair. On the other hand, it is a bit like a horror film. It is, perhaps, the scariest of the lot, and it took some time to come around to it since I'm not a big fan of the horror genre, with [some exceptions](#). I wasn't aware of any of the directors (Catherine Green, Nthato Mokgata, and Graham Gallagher), nor the creators (Nthato Mokgata and Terence Neale) or the writers (Nthato Mokgata, Catherine Green, and Phumlani Pikoli).



Similarly, I hadn't heard of Sabelo Gumede (who voices Mlindos' associate, Nsimbi), Tyson Ngubeni (who voices Mlindos' associate, Joko), or Krofaa Sani Sekyiamah (who voices a little surfer girl/Njabulo's student at beginning of the episode). Mokgata is [part](#) of a South African visual art duo and musician otherwise known as Spoek Mathambo. He has [a distinctly](#) and "socially-engaged" Africanfuturist perspective. Neale is known for music videos.

The other [six episodes/films](#) continue the show's "[unique African perspective](#)" and play to a big audience. This series may be a [breakthrough](#) for the animation industry in Africa. Disney has [under-promoted](#) this series, without question. This leaves it up to the individual creators to do the promotion on their own. Triggerfish, the animation studio primarily behind the series, was praised [on Glassdoor](#). Comments described it as extremely organized, having a great company culture, inspirational, great upward mobility, and high-quality animation. The same comments criticized it for a messy production pipeline, low job retention, and low pay.

I was intrigued when I saw the title of "First Totem Problems," the fifth episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*. The colorful animated scenery and cheerful music pulled me in, as were the struggles of the protagonist. Sheba (voiced by Rene Setlhako) cannot get on a train because it doesn't identify her as an adult. Later, she attends a ceremony to get a totem, so she can become an adult. By accident, she ends up in a dimension where her ancestors are living, akin to the spirit world in *Elena of Avalor*.

She is determined to get a totem. She enters the totem printing room with that goal. Her ancestors tell her that a totem is connected to your community and can't be manufactured. This doesn't faze her. She makes her own totem and is verified as an adult; despite the damage her actions may have caused within the spirit world.

Honestly, this episode/film was the least favorite one. The message appears to be that someone's determination and smugness will help you achieve your goals. Not sure that is a good lesson. The episode could have done something like *Hilda*, where her arrogance causes her trouble and issues with others. I hadn't heard of the episode's writer/director, Tshepo Moche, nor Maame Boateng and Khadidiatou Diouf, who provided additional writing. The same went for the voice actors, like Tumi Morake, Lillian Dube, Rampepe Mohohlo, and Sne Dladla who voiced Momzo, Mimi, Malume, and Wewe respectfully.

My disappointment from the fifth episode/film of *Kizazi Moto* faded away when I watched "Mukudzei". This episode/film not only criticizes online culture and obsession with likes as hollow, but it has the lesson that togetherness and cooperation are more important than individuality. Muku (voiced by Pious Nyenyewa) realizes this firsthand, while he is spray painting the ruins. He is transported, due to a timeline glitch, to a future parallel universe, Muchadenga. In this universe, Great Zimbabwe was never colonized. A fellow scavenger named Rumbie (voiced by Genesis "Gigi Lamayne" Manney) saves him. Rumbie tells him this society has all sorts of technology and the most sophisticated justice system in the multiverse. A monster bird chases them and there is an intense, and well-animated, chase through a tunnel.

The biggest twist is not that Muku realizes he messed up or that Rumbie is also from the past, and saw her brother die in the ruins. It is the fact that the bird is trying to help them get back to the past! The bird even assists them in keeping open the portal so they can return to the present, where Rumbie meets her mother (voiced by Fungai Muzoroza), once again. Muku realizes that being #1 as a [social media influencer](#) doesn't matter. Rather, talking to his dad is more important. Preserving one's culture and history is another important [theme](#).

Like the other episodes/films, I hadn't heard of the directors (Tafadzwa Hove and Pious Nyenyewa). While Hove was the writer, Nyenyewa also was the episode's creator and voice of Muku, one of the protagonists, as noted earlier. Hove [describes](#) himself as a "filmmaker". Nyenyewa [is a Zimbabwean](#) who leads the studio, Alula Animation. Manney is a South African rapper known as Gigi Lamayne. This series is the voice acting debut of her and Muzoroza.

The seventh episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*, "Hatima," was one of the strongest. And I'm not only saying that because I enjoy reading stories about merpeople like *Mermaid Huntress* (formerly named *Ice Massacre*), Mora [in *Disenchantment*](#), Coral [in *High Guardian Spice*](#), or Lettuce [in *Tokyo Mew Mew New*](#) (who can sometimes be a mermaid). The fact that this took place in an underwater society makes me think of the underwater battles in *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, the secret society of Atlantis in the 2000s Disney films (*Atlantis: The Lost Empire* and *Atlantis: Milo's Return*), the Gungan society in *Star Wars*, or the oft-appearing Atlanteans in *Justice League*, *Justice League Unlimited*, *Young Justice*, and other properties.



"Hatima" has common themes like a father's death at the hands of an enemy. Being deemed unworthy to be a warrior, with someone holding you back from your potential is not a new concept. I liked that Mati (voiced by Nkosinathi Mazwai) is headstrong. He won't listen to the reasoning of his brother, Sana (voiced by Tshepo Howza Mosese). Sana doesn't understand Mati's anger, or wants to use a "weapon of war", the Hatima. In fact, he declares that the Hatima are only used by the "air-breathers" (i.e., the humans) and that they don't use them. The backstory begins almost innocently. Nhela (voiced by Mo Mjamba) works in her makeshift lab. Her sister, Alani (voiced by Tumela Candice Modiselle) helps her. She learns that sodium chloride causes the Hatima cells to grow instead of destroying them.

It predictably goes south. Their actions incur the disappointment of King of their society, and their father (voiced by Herald Khumalo). He takes away the Hatima. After Nhela mocks his decrees, Alani refuses to work with her. In a possible allusion to chronic illness, Nhela, who is near death, and coughing up blood, submerges herself in the Hatima. She has changed. But no one will accept her, even after her pleas that this substance can cure all sickness.

The worst betrayal is that Alani says they can "fix" and return her to normal, which is ludicrous. Does she want her sister to almost die, again? Unsurprisingly, she leaves the society, feeling shunned by everyone. This connects Mati and the battle underwater. This whole story is in a memory orb, which reveals this backstory. It causes him to embrace his "enemy," Ntsako (voiced by Lebo Mochudi), and realize they are all related. In some ways, this resolution makes me think of [the sirenas](#) in *Elena of Avalor*, likely referring to the mythologic creature [in Filipino culture](#), which is like a mermaid.

I was familiar with themes of acceptance, the "other," ancestry, and family. Even so, I hadn't come across a series where characters speak Afrikaans, a West Germanic language which evolved in the Dutch Cape Colony used by German, French, Dutch settlers, and those they enslaved. Due to this history, it makes sense that the "oppressors" are speaking this language. I can easily sympathize with what Mati and Nhela are going through, on some level.

This episode/video has extreme potential to become a full animated series. Whether Terence Maluleke and Isaac Mogajane, who were the directors, with Maluleke as creator and Mogajane as writer, want to pursue a longer series, I'm not sure. Tatenda Mbudzi was also on the crew, helping with dialogue. I hadn't heard of Sekoati Tsubane (who voices Mati's father) or Kgomotso Kekana (who voices Young Mati), who are voice actors in this series. Maluleke is [a digital artist](#), while Mogajane is director and writer.

The last three [episodes/films](#) of *Kizazi Moto* are unique, but also connect to others. The eighth episode "Stardust", is all about discrimination, realizing who you want to be, and your "destiny" mixed with magic, amazing 3-D animation, and well-fitting music. The protagonist, Nawara (voiced by May Elghety), wants to escape her hard life, and sees the Oracle as the answer. Despite the Oracle's guard saying that her "kind" isn't allowed, the Oracle (voiced by Laith Nakli) gives her a scroll. He says that it has what she deserves. When she learns there is nothing inside the scroll, she is enraged. She declares she will "take" her destiny by herself.

Not everyone likes the Oracle. He is the enemy of the Pallids. They want a magical star from him, even destroying his droid protector. Later, Nawara escapes with some scrolls. Even so, she feels bad after the Oracle is captured. She becomes friends with Rhipi, the oxen-like beast who is the Oracle's animal companion. She goes on a typical hero's journey to the observatory. In a powerful scene, the Pallid boss (voiced by Mo Ismail) tells Nawara that she shouldn't waste her pride and ambition because people like her don't get to choose their destiny. Of course, she can't accept this. She fights alongside the Oracle and the Pallids are defeated. Comically, they are thrown out of the observatory.

The end of this episode/film implies that Nawara may stay with the Oracle, as she says that she wants to be "nothing, but this". The camaraderie between Nawara and the Oracle is one of the best parts of the episode/film. The same can be said for the voice acting by Elghety, Nakli, Ismail, Amir Hedayah, Rami El Ashram, and Nayra El Sheikh. The latter three voice the droid announcer, a Pallid man, and Pallid woman. Ahmed Teilab wrote and directed this episode/film. [Kenya's](#) screenwriter Voline Ogutu does additional writing. Their talents make "Stardust" that much more impactful.

The ninth episode/film of *Kizazi Moto*, "You Give Me Heart" shares some similarities with the previously mentioned episode/film, "Mukudzei". However, this episode/film, more than any of the others, criticizes the absurdity of online value. The protagonist, Sundiata "Sundi" (voiced by Sechaba Ramphele), has only two followers. This differs from Phefo and Moepi, voiced by Mhlangabezi Richard Mashiya and Lesego Vorster. He joins a show in which contestants are from a version of Earth called Oro Kotoko. Winners enter the land of the Gods, called Hodimo, and become the new God of creativity. To do so, they must convince Maadi, goddess of plenty, to favor them. If the judges are displeased, then a contestant can be rejected.



Luckily for Sundi, he ascends. The announcer, Tsbinki (Mukovhe Monyai), has it out for him, because Sundi embarrassed him by turning him into a clay hummingbird during the contest. Maadi is willing to help him. While he is happy for her help, he never gets close to the follower count he needs to truly ascend: one million followers. He admits to her that it is hard to get people to like you. When he sees the true form of Maadi (voiced by Pearl Thusi), he films her, and causes him to reach his goal.

This is at a cost. He embarrasses her. It results in her losing so many followers that her goddess status disappears. In the final part of the episode, he strikes back. Everything falls apart, with the help of Maadi, with each of the gods losing their forms, and the system overloads. Maadi and Sundi hold hands and tell the program, Jojoba (voiced by Simba Mudereri) to "delete" it all. They appear to die happy while this horrifying place disappears from existence.

"You Give Me Heart" was one of my favorite *Kizazi Moto* episodes/films. I thought the imagery of the Gods working in cubicles is apt. I've always thought that if a higher power was even possible (which it isn't), there would be a massive bureaucracy to manage everything. This is almost never depicted in fiction. I liked Tsbinki's character, to an extent, as she is very energetic and emphatic. Some of [the designs](#) reminded me of [Gem fusions](#) like Sunstone, Sugilite, and Sunstone in *Steven Universe*. The director/creator, Lesego Vorster, and writer, Nonzi Bogatsu, were both new names to me.

The final film/episode of *Kizazi Moto*, "Enkai", shares themes with "Hatima". The mother Goddess, Shiro, has fun with her child, Enkai. Both speak Swahili together. Despite this warmth, she insists that Enkai isn't ready to create new life, and is not ready to come with her to Earth. Understandably, Enkai worries about her mother. She is excited when she makes her first being. Curiously, she travels to Earth and walks through a slum in Kirinyaga Mega City. People there are rapping that the Euro-Kenya Corporation is exploiting a mountain. Her mom, who is trying to put out fires made by the corporation's robots, saves her, just in time.

Shiro's belief that the corporation won't destroy the sacred mountain is proven wrong. The corporate greed, of the humans, almost kills her. Not all hope is lost. Enkai (voiced by Stychie Waweru) creates a whole new world, using items from Earth over years and years, called Thayari. She tells her mom that humans can only save themselves now. She adds that isn't her mom's responsibility anymore, and heals her mother (voiced by Sheila Munyiva). In the final sequence of this episode/film, they both dance in this new world happily.

While the Earth is "left to die", Shiro did as much as she could. She almost died trying to protect Earth. This episode/film has the implication that humans have no one to look up to but themselves. In some ways, this is an atheist theme. This contrasts with many of the other episodes/films, which have almost religious, or religious themes. I wasn't familiar with the voice actresses for Enkai or Shiro, nor those for Awa (Kate Harbor) or Makanga (Varees Marko Lukyamuzzi). The director/writer, Ng'engo Mukii, was also new. She is [a film director](#) and Tufts University [professor](#).

I have further thoughts on *Kizazi Moto* before I end this review. The series was promoted badly. I only remembered it all thanks to some savvy users on social media. As such, the promotional campaign could have been better. Secondly, having all ten episodes/films drop one day is a recipe for having them disappear altogether, with people forgetting about them. The release of the episodes/films should have been spaced out along 10 weeks, or five weeks at minimum.

This series is unlike any other series I've seen, in part because it is an anthology. Each episode/film doesn't necessarily connect to the previous one. Even so, they all show [the brilliance](#) of African animation industry, whether through the writing, animation, or dialogue. Although I haven't seen any of the episodes of *Star Wars: Visions* yet, it has a similar feel, in terms of each episode standing alone and not necessarily connecting to those before it. At the

same time, this series differs from other well-known sci-fi anthology series like *Black Mirror*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Ray Bradbury Theater*, and *Love, Death & Robots*.

African stories are front and center in *Kizazi Moto*, just as Mexican stories are at the center of [Victor and Valentino](#) and [Villainous](#). The fact that Ramsey, known for his co-direction of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, gives this series credibility. Unfortunately, many originally incorrectly labeled this as "Afrofuturist," despite the distinction as I noted earlier in this review, with [some exceptions](#). With the premiere of *Supa Team 4* late last month, [My Dad the Bounty Hunter](#) season 2 this month, and premieres for *Iyanu: Child of Wonder*, and *Dantai*, hopefully in 2024 or 2025, Black science fiction is moving to a broader audience.

Recently, Disney announced that *The Proud Family: Louder and Prouder* would be getting a third season. At the same convention, Annecy International Animation Film Festival, it was also [revealed](#) that *The Sunnyridge 3*, *StuGo*, *Dragon Striker*, and *The Doomies* will be going [into production](#), along with a second season of *Kiff*, and future premiere of *Primos* sometime this year. All of this shows that Disney appears to recognize the value of diverse storytelling.

On the other hand, Disney continues to resist demands of striking writers and actors. Recently, newly-anointed Disney CEO, Bob Iger, [denigrated](#) striking writers and actors as "very disruptive". The former are asking for a ratified labor contract, a fair residual formula for streaming services, stronger regulation of self-tape auditions, preventing artificial intelligence from replacing actors, while the latter want to limit use of artificial intelligence in the writing process, size of writers' rooms, job security, and increased pay.

Due to Iger's statement, there's no guarantee Disney would pay them fairly or accept their demands at the present. However, it seems unlikely that the twin strikes by actors and writers will last long-term because, hopefully, the studio heads likely want to make a deal, even though [some](#) want to let things drag on until union members start "losing their apartments and...their houses." Furthermore, it is not known how this will impact Disney's push for diverse storytelling.

Kizazi Moto, along with various aforementioned series which are in production, those renewed, or those airing ([Kiff](#), [Hamster & Gretel](#), [Moon Girl](#), and *Hailey's On It!*) is part of Disney's present course of action. Disney also has series in development such as *Iwaju*, *Cookies & Milk*, *Tiana*, or *Moana: The Series*. Clearly, the executives want to bring in, promote, and produce non-White stories. This was already clear with the Thai focus in [Amphibia](#) and various

Black and Afro-Latina characters in [The Owl House](#). It is even more evident with recent announcements.

I'm not sure where *Kizazi Moto* will go from here, but each has the potential to be expanded into their own series, or something more. I hope that they don't suffer the fate of the little-known web series, *Recorded by Arizal*, by Filipino creator Yssa Badiola. That series was ignored by Rooster Teeth, and not greenlit into a full series, despite [the amazing potential](#) of the four-episode prelude.

Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire can be watched on Disney+.

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Voice Acting	★★★★★
Animation	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★☆
4.8	
★★★★★	

Chapter 9: Supa Team 4 Spoiler-Filled Review



Supa Team 4 is a computer-generated superhero action-comedy series. Malenga Mulendema is the series creator and co-executive producer. Trigger Fish Animation Studios, known for the recent animated series *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* and [Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire](#), and various television specials and films.

This series shows its Zambian roots from the get-go, beginning in Zambia's capital, Lusaka. A reporter, Geoffrey (voiced by Sne Dladla) talks about a mysterious tornado striking the city. Former secret agent Mama K (voiced by [Pamela Nomvete](#)) brings together all [the protagonists](#). They include a gutsy and agile girl with [hair](#) parted into two box-like sections named Temwe Chiti (voiced by Kimani Arthur) who is a bit of a juvenile delinquent" and troublemaker; a smart, organized, and creative techy girl named Komana Mwinga (voiced by Zowa Ngwira); a brainy, industrious, athletic, and tall girl named Zikomo "Zee" Phiri (voiced by Nancy Sekhokoane); and a physically strong, calm, and wise girl with an afro tied at the top named Monde Wamunyima (voiced by Namisa Mdlalose). Each has their own superhero names. Temwe is T-Mlilo, Komana is K-Bongo, Zee is Za-Mpezi, and Monde is M-Kozo.

In some ways, *Supa Team 4* is like other teen superhero series in recent years (*DC Super Hero Girls*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and *Young Justice*) and classic series from the 2000s (*Static Shock* and *My Life as a Teenage Robot*). It comes at a time there are is growing number of Black animated series, like *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*, *The Proud Family*:

Louder and Prouder, *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*, *Craig of the Creek*, *Central Park*, *Iwájú* (upcoming), *Iyanu: Child of Wonder* (upcoming), and *Karma's World*. The latter series ended in September 2022. There are indie animated series [focusing](#) on Black stories such as *Defenders of Alodia*, *Jumbie*, *Captain Zero*, [LimeLight](#), and *Diver: The Animated Series*. Most are [in development](#) or on hiatus like *Diver*.

The difference with this series is that its stories are completely Zambian and [said to be](#) "something special for Zambians." Even so, it is relatable to everyone, like *Kizazi Moto*, a series primarily produced by the same animation studio. In both cases, the shows [bode well](#) for the development of the African animation industry. *Supa Team 4*, like *Kizazi Moto*, emphasizes the importance of family, Monde is close to her sister Marjory (voiced by [Celine Tshika](#)), sports (through Zee), and political corruption. City residents call for Mayor Sikazwe (voiced by Sne Dladla) to resign, which the villain exploits. Temwe's love of eating food may be relatable.

Like any other superhero series, there is a need for them to keep their real identities secret, even from those that they know well. This is accomplished through their transformation into superheroes wearing specialized super suits ala magical girl style. Unlike any other transformations I've seen, each transformation has upbeat music and a distinctive flair, making it stand apart.

All four girls are chosen after being watched for weeks. It echoes Jerry's reasoning for bringing in Sam, Alex, and Clover in *Totally Spies!* or "choosing" the Mew Mews [in](#) *Tokyo Mew Mew New*. Different from that series, Mama K lets the girls choose whether to be superheroes. The girls in that series were experimented on without their consent and forced into the superhero role. In this series, the girls have gadgets to entrap and defeat villains. Temwe's ribbon wand reminds me of [Mega Pearl](#)'s weapon in *Steven Universe Future* or Cure Parfait's rainbow ribbon [in](#) *Pretty Cure*.

There is one other similarity between *Tokyo Mew Mew New* and *Supa Team 4*: the importance of preserving the environment. Komana builds a carbon-capture machine in the first episode, allowing her to capture a tornado. She receives a scholarship from Lee Magedzee (voiced by John McMillian), owner of a local energy company, Magedzee Power Corporation (MPC). He is impressed by her portable invention. It purifies carbon dioxide into safe carbon-based fuels. He later praises her solar-powered "smart art" that can charge phones and other devices.

Having an A.I. like T.O.M.I. (voiced by Thabe Ntebe), otherwise known as Technical Operations Management Interface, is not unique. Other series have featured A.I. as well. This A.I. is not a be-all-end-all. It is only one of the tools they use against villains, such as Storm Drain, Locus Pocus, Snap Back, Alley-Gator, Trash Man, Otherwise, I liked the role of Mama K's goat, Chomps (voiced by Gary Martin) throughout the series. It is even revealed that he is a secret agent!

Through [the series](#), there is a push-and-pull of responsibilities to family and school. Temwe manifests this by her often run-ins with the school principal, Nkwashi (voiced by Abubakar Salim), who has it out for her. She gets suspended when Nkwashi thinks her ribbon wand might hurt someone. She later learns how to use her "hangry power" during battles rather than provoking Nkwashi's ire during the school day.

The series encourages viewers to believe Nkwashi is the shadowy villain, Bad Magz (voiced by John McMillian). There are hints. He has files on every student at Kamiji Secondary School. In the final episode, Temwe thinks that Nkwashi vanished like smoke. She is convinced he is the villain, after he declares she can't volunteer with Mama K (cover for their secret activities) if she fails a chemistry test. The girls don't buy her hair-brained explanation.

The series opening, first shown when the second episode begins, makes each episode pop. While the series music is by Ben Onono. Sampa the great does the [theme music](#), in collaboration with Mag 44. It must be one of the best opening sequences that I've seen in some time, and I watch a lot of anime series.



Following the first episode, *Supa Team 4* turns to subjects [like nanotech](#). The team reverse engineers some nanotech locusts for their own purposes. The obsession with popularity, homesickness (in the case of Monde and Marjory), garbage/rubbish collection, vlogging, value of art, education, and mind control are other topics. In the first half of the series, the villain is a shadowy figure not unlike the character of the same name [in *OK K.O.: Let's Be Heroes!*](#). But this person is more malicious.

He wants everyone in the city to lose electric power. This leads to random power cuts ([load shedding](#)) to compensate for electric energy loss after the hydroelectric dam is damaged. This allows Lee Magedzee to step in, declaring his wind farm will be upgraded and generate more electricity. At the same time, the villain exploits anger against the mayor for his own benefit. All the while, people hanker for more solar power.

Mama K has [her own secrets](#). Formerly, she headed a crime-fighting team at the Intelligence Agency for Zambia (IAZ) and had the code name of Mkango. She, a computer expert named Rhino/Chipembe/Uncle Chi and a confidante (and inventive genius) named Towela, worked to bring down [Chusi](#).

Even worse, this villain steals top-secret information, uploading the information to his mind, and destroys the original documents. As a result, the government didn't have access to their own intelligence! This ends sadly. Chusi used their device, the Brainstorm, to wipe the

memories of Towela. It gives her amnesia. He also blinds Chi. Mama K is alone. The four protagonists cheer her up, convincing her they can all take down Chusi, also known as Bad Magz, together.

The *Supa Team 4* season one finale blows everything wide open. Chusi gets, thanks to Professor Greenthumbs, some of the tech that Team 4 is using. Principal Nkwashi says that his own goal is to help Temwe. He is worried that she will become like him. He was a feisty and spirited kid who lacked focus. The four team members follow a Baobab tree to an abandoned mine. Greenthumbs deactivates their super suits, takes away their weapons, and pulls them into an underground lair! The biggest reveal is not that Nkwashi isn't the villain, but that Chusi [is Lee Magedze!](#)

This unexpected twist shows how devious the writers and animators were, leading the audience to believe that the Principal was the villain. The fact that Lee Magedze is the villain means he has the duality of being a Black leader who is trying to increase people's power and trying to take it away. My prediction is that he will attempt to unseat the mayor. The citizens would elect him if he ran on a Black empowerment platform. Once in office, he will have even more power, as the villain and the mayor.

There are reports that *Supa Team 4* will have [at least](#) 25 episodes. In fact, the Director of Production at Triggerfish Animation Studios, Mike Buckland, [confirmed](#) a second season, writing "hold your breath for Season 2, because it just gets better from here." Such a season will undoubtedly continue to center on African stories, without any White characters, and remain relatable to Black girls and Zambians. The series may lean more into romance as well, as Zee's friend, Chipso Hamoonga (voiced by Daniel "KStar" Lyapa), has a crush on her, and a boy has a crush on Temwe.

Furthermore, the series [may influence](#) more Africans to tell their stories through [animation](#), as they may see themselves, and their experiences represented, even as some Zambians [claimed](#) the character accents weren't authentic. *Supa Team 4* is indicative of how collaboration is important in Africa, as the animation industry deals with many challenges, that "[anyone from anywhere](#) can be a superhero," and the [great storytelling traditions](#) on the continent. At the same time, I'm glad that [the series](#) was renamed from the original title ordered [in 2019](#), *Mama K's Team 4*, as the current title makes the less about Mama K and more about the team.

Significantly, the series is dubbed in isiZulu. Mama K voiced by Linda Sokhulu. Many of the same voice actors re-appear. This dub promotes accessibility to a new audience. It [provides the opportunity](#) for people within South Africa, and other areas where [Zulu is spoken](#), to connect with the characters within the series.



I find it funny that [some complain](#) about threats and violence in [this series](#), since that is common in animation. Such complaints make the series appear more mature than the reality. It is more accurate to say *Supa Team 4* is an all-ages series [full](#) of adventure, action, and humor, with a diverse cast. In addition, it [defies](#) oft-stereotypes [of Africa](#). Others [reported](#) that the series draws visual inspiration from hip-hop girls groups and retro 1990s R&B groups. Malcolm Wope, an artist from Cameroon, does the visual design. The series has distinct characters, a real world but futuristic setting, while working through [the girls' interpersonal issues](#).

Despite [calls](#) by Morrow for sharing the show, which she called a "[project of passion](#)," there is little chatter about the series on Reddit, and only [one mature fanfiction](#) written on July 30. There is more chatter [on X/Twitter](#), with one [account](#) even as an unofficial fan page. Furthermore, on [Tumblr](#), fans praised the show's animation, described the series as relatable, cute, have listed LGBTQ+ headcanons, drew fan art, and liked the magical girlesque transformations of the four protagonists. There may be chatter on other platforms, like Mastodon servers, but I am not personally aware of it.

Like they do with many series these days, Netflix did the fans of *Supa Team 4* a disservice. All eight episodes dropped the same day on Netflix. While this makes it easy [to binge](#) the entire season, it creates a situation of catch-up among fans who run the risk of seeing spoilers on social media for episodes they haven't watched. This severely limits the possibility to discuss each episode without spoilers and [can ruin pacing for a series](#). Netflix should have followed the model used for anime: dropping one episode each week. That would have allowed for more community to build around the show, than dropping it one day and moving on. It is irresponsible.

Although I wasn't familiar with series writers Ng'endo Mukii, Khadidiatou Diouf, Voline Ogutu, Maame Boateng, [Omotunde Akiode](#), Tshepo Moche, or Gloria Huwiler, I knew of Vanessa Kanu. She directed the third episode/film [of *Kizazi Moto*](#) entitled "Moremi." It centered on the frailty of the human condition, family togetherness, and the value of one's soul.

Series director Dave Osburne, assistant director Tabitha O'Connell, production designer /art director Alessandro Chirico were names. I did not know series producer Ceri Barnes, head writer [Amy Keating Rogers](#), and [story editor Cindy Morrow](#) either. Rogers worked on other girl-power series like *The Powerpuff Girls* and *My Little Pony: Friendship*. In addition, Osburne has worked on his share of animated series since the mid-1990s, as did O'Connell. At the same time, Chirico worked on *Black Mirror*, a series based upon *The Twilight Zone*. Barnes has been producer since the late 1990s.

For many voice actors, this may be their first voice role. Arthur previously voiced Willow in *Nella the Princess Knight*. MacMillan provided his voice for video game characters, as did Martin. Salim voiced Zanror in *The Legend of Vox Machina*. Animators have worked on series such as *Kazazi Moto*, *Star Wars: Visions*, and *The Amazing World of Gumball*, and films (*Seal Team* and *Storks*).

I excited to see where [the series](#) goes from here. Maybe Mama K will [practice](#) Nichiren Buddhism like her voice actor. Perhaps Zee will have Cuban roots like her voice actress or some of the main cast of *Supa Team 4* will be queer. Looking through the social media of the protagonists, I am seriously doubting the latter.

In Zambia, same-sex sexual activity, for men and women, is illegal, a legal measure [inherited from British control](#), and reportedly many queer people are closeted. Unfortunately, there is a slim chance for change. The Zambian High Court upheld acquittal of a human rights activist, who called for the country to recognize rights of sex workers and LGBTQ+ people, [in](#)

[2013](#). However, a public opinion poll, [released in 2010](#), indicated widespread disapproval of "homosexual behaviour."

Even so, the series is primarily produced in South Africa. After the end of apartheid, it [outlawed discrimination](#) based on sexual orientation. Furthermore, it is the [only African state](#) to legalize same-sex marriage. In addition, there are [legal protections](#) for LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in employment and elsewhere. At the same time, the creators may want to avoid making the series controversial and won't have any queer relationships so the show can appeal to all Zambians.

Ultimately, I hope *Supa Team 4* reaches new heights in season 2. Maybe it will pave the way for African animation in the Africanfuturist, superhero, comedy, adventure, action, and other genres.

Supa Team 4 can be streamed on Netflix.

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Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★★
Story	★★★★★
5	
★★★★★	

Concluding Words

After putting this together, I am inspired to write about more Black animated series, apart from upcoming reviews of *Young Love* and *Iwájú*. I've also written about Black animated series in indie animation scene [here](#) and [here](#).

- Burkely

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